



Bald Hills Wind Farm

Noise Complaint Evaluation and Response Plan

1 Introduction and Purpose

Bald Hills Wind Farm (**BHWF**) is located approximately 12km south east of the township of Tarwin Lower in South Gippsland, Victoria, and consists of 52 wind turbines with a total capacity of 106.6MW. The wind farm is operated by Bald Hills Wind Farm Pty Ltd (**BHWFPL**).

This plan identifies management processes to be applied to Noise Complaints relating to the operation of the wind farm's wind turbines.

All Complaints, including Noise Complaints, received from the community are recorded and BHWFPL will endeavour to respond in a timely and courteous manner. Pursuant to this plan BHWFPL is committed to:

- providing an accessible, open and transparent Noise Complaint handling process;
- ensuring all Noise Complaints are managed fairly, sensitively and efficiently; and
- clarifying the roles and responsibilities of BHWFPL in complaint handling, including how complaint data is recorded, analysed and reported.

If Complaints arise as a result of the operation of the wind farm that do not fall into the category of Noise Complaints (including, but not limited to Complaints in relation to noise and other impacts from construction and maintenance works, traffic, shadow flicker etc), those Complaints are managed via the Complaint Evaluation and Response Plan endorsed by the Minister for Planning, which forms part of BHWF's Planning Permit.

1.1 Application

BHWFPL is responsible for the implementation and management of this Noise Complaint Evaluation and Response Plan (**NCERP**).

The NCERP has been developed in accordance with:

- *AS 10002:2022 – Guidelines for Complaint Management in Organisations*;
- *NZS 6808:1998 – New Zealand Standard – Acoustics – The Assessment and Measurement of Sound from Wind Turbine Generators (the **NZ Standard**)*;
- *Environment Protection Regulations 2021 (Vic) (the **Regulations**)*; and
- *Privacy Act 1998 (Cth)*.

A copy of this NCERP is available on the BHWF website, located at <https://baldhillswindfarm.com.au/>.

1.2 Definitions

Applicable Noise Limit means the wind turbine noise limit determined in accordance with the Regulations and the Planning Permit, as amended from time to time.

Complainant means the person or entity, or their authorised representative, who lodges a Noise Complaint in accordance with this NCERP.

Complaint means an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about BHWF related to its operation, staff, or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required. For clarity, a Complaint excludes Feedback, which will not trigger an investigation process.

Complaints Register means the electronic record of Noise Complaints, responses and rectifications maintained by BHWFPL.

Compliance Officer means the BHWFPL staff member(s) responsible for receiving the Noise Complaint, maintaining the Complaints Register, reviewing the NCERP and recommending changes

to the Board of BHWFPL.

Feedback means opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern to or about BHWF, its operation, staff or handling of a complaint. Feedback may be managed as a Noise Complaint at the discretion of BHWFPL.

Internal Noise Assessment means an internal assessment conducted by BHWFPL into the nature of the Noise Complaint.

Invalid Complaint has meaning given in section 3.8.

Noise Complaint means a Complaint concerning noise associated with the operation of the wind farm's wind turbines.

Noise Investigation means an investigation by a suitably qualified technical consultant into the nature of the Noise Complaint, compliance with applicable Noise Limits and any other issues identified by the consultant.

Noise Investigation Report means a report prepared by a suitably qualified technical consultant documenting the results of a Noise Investigation

Noise Management Plan means the noise management plan prepared for BHWF under the Regulations.

Planning Permit means Planning Permit TRA/03/002-2 issued for BHWF, as amended from time to time.

Repeat Complaints means those Noise Complaints that have been received by BHWFPL on previous occasions, and so will be handled with the process set out in section 3.7 of this NCERP.

Unreasonable Conduct has meaning given in section 3.6.

Unreasonable Noise is defined by section 3(1) of the Environment Protection Act 2017 (Vic) and means noise that is

(a) unreasonable having regard to the following—

(i) its volume, intensity or duration;

(ii) its character;

(iii) the time, place and other circumstances in which it is emitted;

(iv) how often it is emitted;

(v) any prescribed factors; or

(b) is prescribed to be unreasonable noise.

1.3 Responsible Parties

The Board of BHWFPL has overall accountability for addressing Noise Complaints and ensuring that each Noise Complaint is dealt with in accordance with this NCERP. When required, the Directors of BHWFPL will be responsible for engaging specialised technical consultants and advisors.

2 In an Emergency

Some issues must be dealt with urgently. These generally relate to imminent safety issues, emergency

situations and property damage.

For life threatening situations, call 000. Imminent safety issues and emergency situations should be reported to the relevant local authority (i.e. SES, Police, Ambulance or Fire authority).

3 Managing Noise Complaints

BHWFPL acknowledges that anyone has the right to lodge a Complaint (including a Noise Complaint), and BHWFPL endeavours to answer all Complaints promptly, respectfully and objectively. BHWFPL values Feedback and is committed to continuous improvement of this NCERP.

BHWFPL is committed to making the NCERP process accessible and user friendly, and can provide flexible methods for lodging Noise Complaints where required. This may include liaising with a support person or family member of a person who may require additional assistance to make a Noise Complaint.

3.1 Method of Noise Complaint to BHWFPL

Noise Complaints can be raised by a person, company, or community group by several means, via the following contact details:

Phone: 1800 027 689 (toll free number which allows messages to be left and requests the caller to detail the reason for the call and provide return contact details).

Email: info@baldhillswindfarm.com.au

Mail: Bald Hills Wind Farm Pty Ltd
c/o Foresight Group
Suite 1, Level 1, 150 Collins Street, Melbourne Victoria 3000

Any changes to the above details will be published on the BHWF website.

3.2 Method of Complaint to South Gippsland Shire Council

The local municipality for the BHWF is the South Gippsland Shire Council. BHWFPL may receive enquiries or complaints from time to time which, following investigation, may not relate to BHWF and may be more appropriately directed to the Council or other regulators.

The South Gippsland Shire Council may be contacted using the details below:

Phone: (03) 5662 9200 After Hours Phone: (03) 5662 9200
Interpreter: 131 450
National Relay Service: 133 677 (for hearing/speech impaired)

Email: council@southgippsland.vic.gov.au

Mail: Private Bag 4, Leongatha VIC 3953

In person at the South Gippsland Shire Council Office: 9 Smith Street, Leongatha VIC 3953. See Council website (<https://www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au>) for current office hours.

3.3 Method of Complaint to the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner

The Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner (**Commissioner**) is an independent role created by the Australian Government, reporting to the Minister for Climate Change and Energy. A key role of the Commissioner is to receive complaints from concerned residents regarding proposed or operating wind farm facilities, large scale solar farms, energy storage facilities and new major transmission projects.

The Commissioner's role in complaint handling is a facilitation role only. The Commissioner will not formally recommend particular solutions to disputes, arbitrate complaints or provide formal advice. The

Commissioner may, however, suggest possible solutions for consideration by the parties.

The Office of the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner may be contacted using the details below:

Phone: 1800 656 395
Email: aeic@aeic.gov.au
Mail: PO Box 24434
 Melbourne VIC 3001

3.4 Confidentiality

Personal information collected during the Noise Complaint management process will be held in accordance with the *Australian Privacy Principles* set out in the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth).

3.5 Logging Complaints

When a Noise Complaint is received, certain minimum information will be required before BHWFPL can commence its assessment of the Noise Complaint. This information is listed in the table at **Appendix A**, which BHWFPL uses to document the details of a Noise Complaint.

If the minimum information is not provided, BHWFPL will contact the Complainant to obtain the required information. If the relevant information is still not provided, BHWFPL may be unable to process the Noise Complaint (see Invalid Complaints process in section 3.8 below).

BHWFPL will maintain a Complaints Register. The Complaints Register will include a summary and details of any Complaints received, information received from the Complainant, copies of all correspondence and records of all discussions with the Complainant and copies of any information, reports or findings provided by BHWFPL. These records will be maintained for a minimum period of seven years.

BHWFPL will promptly provide status updates about the assessment of a Noise Complaint to a Complainant on request. Details from the Complaints Register will be included in the relevant annual statements from BHWFPL as required under the *Environment Protection Regulations 2021* (Vic), as amended from time to time, and the Complaints Register and complaints response process will be provided to the Environmental Protection Authority on request.

3.6 Unreasonable Conduct by Complainants

If a Complainant makes unreasonable demands or engages in behaviour in a manner that is wholly unreasonable (for example, by making threats of harm to BHWFPL staff or third parties or by using abusive language or unreasonable aggression), this conduct may be considered 'Unreasonable Conduct'. BHWFPL will keep a record of Unreasonable Conduct.

BHWFPL is committed to treating all Complainants with respect and cooperation, and expects that BHWFPL staff and contractors will receive the same treatment in return. While Unreasonable Conduct will not necessarily preclude valid Noise Complaints from being addressed by BHWFPL, this type of conduct may impede the information gathering, assessment and resolution process. BHWFPL may be unable to progress resolution of the Noise Complaint in accordance with this NCERP where Unreasonable Conduct is impeding that process.

3.7 Repeat Complaints

Occasionally, operational wind farm projects receive multiple complaints from the same Complainant, sometimes over a long period of time. Where multiple Noise Complaints have been received by BHWFPL from a Complainant and those Noise Complaints have previously been addressed in accordance with this NCERP, BHWFPL may treat any new Noise Complaints received from that Complainant as Repeat Complaints.

For Repeat Complaints, BHWFPL will conduct an Internal Noise Assessment of new Noise Complaints in accordance with Stage 2 of the Noise Complaint Response set out below at section 3.8(b), which may include a site inspection to identify unusual site conditions or maintenance issues. These steps will be undertaken in accordance with BHWF's Noise Management Plan.

If unusual site conditions or maintenance issues are identified, a Noise Investigation may be undertaken and will be dealt with in accordance with Stages 3 and 4 as described below.

If no substantive new site conditions or maintenance issues have been identified and the Repeat Complaint relates to a property or properties which have previously been thoroughly investigated (in BHWFPL's opinion, acting reasonably) and compliance with the Planning Permit has been demonstrated, the Repeat Complaint will be closed. The Noise Complaint will be marked as "closed" in the Complaints Register and the Complainant will be issued with a brief response confirming the outcome of the investigation.

3.8 Noise Complaint Response

When a Noise Complaint relating to the operation or maintenance of the wind farm is received, BHWFPL will follow five main stages of Noise Complaint Response:

Stage 1 – Receipt of Noise Complaint and Preliminary Screening

Stage 2 – Evaluation and Response

Stage 3 – Implementation of Corrective Measures

Stage 4 – Close out of the Noise Complaint

Stage 5 – Analyse and Review

3.8.1 Stage 1(a) – Receipt of Noise Complaint

When BHWFPL receives a Noise Complaint via telephone, email or letter, it will check that the minimum information has been provided. In the case of a Noise Complaint made by telephone, the caller will be asked to provide the minimum information by the Compliance Officer.

If a Noise Complaint is received by telephone during out of office hours, BHWFPL will attempt to call back the following day to obtain details of the Noise Complaint, unless the caller leaves sufficient details to allow BHWFPL to process the Noise Complaint.

BHWFPL may contact the Complainant to request additional information if required.

BHWFPL will register the Noise Complaint in the Complaints Register in accordance with section 3.5.

BHWFPL will advise the Complainant of the complaint reference number assigned to their matter. Multiple Noise Complaints received from the same Complainant will be grouped under one reference number.

Within three (3) business days of receiving the Noise Complaint, BHWFPL will send written acknowledgement of receipt of the Noise Complaint to the Complainant, either by email or letter.

3.8.2 Stage 1(b) – Preliminary Screening

All Noise Complaints received by BHWFPL will undergo preliminary screening.

BHWFPL will review the Noise Complaint to determine whether it is valid for further assessment.

If BHWFPL determines that a Noise Complaint is valid, assessment of the Noise Complaint will progress to Stage 2.

Complaints

Preliminary screening may result in a Noise Complaint being re-categorised as a Complaint to be investigated and managed under the Complaint Evaluation and Response Plan, which governs complaints other than arising from wind turbine noise. This may occur if the turbines were not

operating during the stated time but the Complaint is suspected to relate to other BHWF activities or operations.

Repeat Complaints

If the Noise Complaint is characterised as a Repeat Complaint, it will be managed in accordance with section 3.7 above.

Invalid Complaints

Complaints that do not appear to relate to the operation of BHWF may be considered 'invalid'. A Noise Complaint may be considered to be an Invalid Complaint where, for example, a Noise Complaint is made but the turbines were not operating during the stated time, or where the Noise Complaint concerns an issue that is not within the scope of the BHWF project such as noise emanating from third-party activities and it can be reasonably concluded that it is not a Complaint requiring investigation under the Complaint Evaluation and Response Plan.

BHWFPL may also be unable to assess a Noise Complaint if the Complainant has failed to provide adequate information. Information required for BHWFPL to assess a Noise Complaint is set out in **Appendix A**.

If a Noise Complaint is determined to be invalid, BHWFPL will contact the Complainant in writing, within ten (10) business days after receipt of the Noise Complaint, to advise that the Noise Complaint has been assessed to be invalid. BHWFPL will also advise of the grounds on which the Noise Complaint has not been accepted. The Noise Complaint will then be marked as "closed" on the Complaints Register.

3.8.3 Stage 2 – Evaluation and Response

BHWFPL will conduct an initial assessment of the Noise Complaint based on the information provided to assess the Noise Complaint and determine the next steps: Early Resolution, Internal Noise Assessment or, if required, a Noise Investigation.

Where practicable, BHWFPL will attempt to resolve all Noise Complaints within ten (10) business days of receiving the Noise Complaint. When this is not possible, for example when a Noise Investigation or corrective actions are warranted, the Compliance Officer will notify the Complainant that further time is required. BHWFPL will maintain communication with the Complainant during the evaluation process.

Early Resolution

Where possible, Noise Complaints will be resolved by the relevant front-line staff. Early Resolution applies where a Noise Complaint is able to be resolved at short notice (e.g. by repairing a wind turbine fault, by providing further information to the Complainant etc.). If the Noise Complaint cannot be resolved during the initial contact (e.g. telephone call), written correspondence will be sent to the Complainant as soon as practicable, to detail BHWFPL's response.

Internal Noise Assessment

Where Early Resolution is not possible for a Noise Complaint, an Internal Noise Assessment will be undertaken as soon as practicable to determine whether the Noise Complaint is likely to relate to the operation of the wind farm's wind turbines. Consideration will be given to:

- the nature of the Noise Complaint, including the description of the noise provided by the Complainant, and weather conditions and operational data available at the time and date of the noise to which the Noise Complaint relates;
- whether the noise to which the Noise Complaint relates is an isolated occurrence;
- whether BHWFPL is able to resolve the issue without further investigation; and
- if not, whether the noise may relate to a maintenance issue, or change in the nature of operations of the wind farm's wind turbines close to the location of the Noise Complaint.

Where BHWFPL receives multiple Noise Complaints from a single Complainant, BHWFPL may assess those Noise Complaints in one Internal Noise Assessment.

Any corrective measures required will be undertaken in accordance with Stage 3.

Noise Investigation

In the event that BHWFPL determines that further investigation of a Noise Complaint is required, it will initiate a Noise Investigation.

A Noise Investigation carried out under this NCERP will be conducted in accordance with BHWF's Noise Management Plan and will involve noise testing to assess compliance with operational noise requirements.

A Noise Investigation Report will be prepared following a Noise Investigation.

Reporting the outcome of an Internal Noise Assessment or Noise Investigation

BHWFPL will keep the Complainant informed of the status of the Internal Noise Assessment or Noise Investigation.

Upon completion of the Internal Noise Assessment or the Noise Investigation, BHWFPL will, as soon as practicable, advise the Complainant in writing of the outcome of the assessment/investigation and any corrective measures which may be required. In the case of a Noise Investigation, a copy of the Noise Investigation Report will be shared with the Complainant.

If no corrective measures are required, the Noise Complaint will be closed out in accordance with Stage 4.

If the Internal Noise Assessment or the Noise Investigation Report concludes with a reasonable level of certainty that the noise levels at the Complainant's property (or alternative monitoring point) are likely to comply with the Applicable Noise Limit, or that the wind turbines are not otherwise causing Unreasonable Noise according to the definition of section 3(1)(a) of the *Environment Protection Act 2017* (Vic), the Complainant will be notified and BHWFPL may elect to take no further action and close out the Noise Complaint in accordance with Stage 4.

3.8.4 Stage 3 - Implementation of Corrective Measures

In the event that corrective measures are required following an Internal Noise Assessment or a Noise Investigation, BHWFPL will, within twenty (20) business days after notifying the Complainant of the outcome of the assessment/investigation, provide a schedule for the implementation of any corrective measures to the Complainant.

If a Noise Investigation under Stage 2 establishes that the wind farm is not compliant with the relevant noise standard, a noise remediation plan shall be prepared in accordance with the NMP.

BHWFPL will ensure that the identified corrective measures, or the noise remediation plan, where applicable, are implemented, and once completed, will notify the Complainant in accordance with Stage 4.

3.8.5 Stage 4 - Close Out of the Noise Complaint

General

BHWFPL will provide written confirmation to the Complainant when a Noise Complaint is closed, and mark the Noise Complaint as "Closed" on the Complaints Register.

BHWFPL Record

At the close out of a Noise Complaint, BHWFPL will keep a record of the steps taken to address the Noise Complaint, the outcome of the Noise Complaint and any undertakings or follow-up action that may be required.

Corrective Measures

BHWFPL will confirm in writing to the Complainant once implementation of any corrective measures is complete. BHWFPL will then record in the Complaints Register that the Noise Complaint is "closed".

Unreasonable conduct

Evidence of any unreasonable Complainant conduct will be also kept on record.

3.8.6 Stage 5 – Analyse and Review

Noise Complaints will be analysed to identify systemic, recurring and single incident problems and trends. If it is identified that there are significant recurring Noise Complaints received from different Complainants, BHWFPL will consider available solutions or measures to reduce or eliminate future recurrence of the identified issue, and implement those measures where reasonably practicable.

3.9 Other resolution processes

If a Complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the response received or BHWFPL's management of the Noise Complaint, the Complainant may escalate the Noise Complaint to the Board of BHFPL for further consideration, or to an external body. The Complainant can also contact the Commissioner (section 3.3).

In some circumstances, a matter which has been the subject of this complaint resolution process may progress to formal dispute resolution or adjudication. In those circumstances, the complaint resolution process under this NCERP will be terminated to enable the matter in dispute to be determined in accordance with the formal process.

4 Document History and Status**4.1 Revision History and Document Control**

The NCERP is a controlled document maintained by the Board of BHWFPL.

The Compliance Officer will review the NCERP and recommend changes to the Board of BHWFPL as required. Any changes to the NCERP must be reviewed and approved by the Board of BHWFPL and submitted to the Minister for Planning for review, approval and endorsement prior to implementation.

4.2 Distribution of copies

Distribution of the NCERP has been made to the following parties. Printed copies are uncontrolled documents.

Copy	Party
1	Bald Hills Wind Farm Site Manager
2	Bald Hills Wind Farm Pty Ltd
3	Department of Transport and Planning
4	South Gippsland Shire Council
5	Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner

This Plan will be made available to all BHWFPL employees. All employees handling Complaints will be provided with training to appropriately receive, record and resolve Complaints, including Noise Complaints.

Appendix A – BHWF Noise Complaint Evaluation and Response Plan: Noise Complaint information to be recorded

The purpose of this table is to ensure BHWFPL captures and records relevant details of the Noise Complaint and Complainant. Where boxes are marked with an asterisk (*), this denotes the minimum information that is required by BHWFPL in order to allow the Noise Complaint to be assessed. If the minimum information is not provided, BHWFPL may not be able to accept the Noise Complaint for assessment.

Information Required	Details
1. Date and time Complaint lodged*	
2. Name of Complainant*	
3. Address*	
4. Contact details: Home or mobile phone number* Email address	
5. Complaint Reference Number (to be communicated to the Complainant)	
6. Location of Noise Complaint* Including (where applicable and available): the location of the Complainant when noise incident occurred (i.e. address, location inside or outside of the house etc); approximate distance to BHWF at the stated time; perceived direction from which the noise came; origin of the perceived noise if able to be determined (i.e. specific turbine); and any applicable property reference number if connected to a noise testing location	
7. Date and Time of Noise Complaint incidence*	
8. Duration of Noise Complaint incidence*	
9. Description of the Complainant's concerns Including (where relevant and available) description of the perceived noise, rate of occurrence, and any potential special audible characteristics.	
10. Prevailing Weather Conditions (if relevant) Wind, temperature, rain, etc.	
11. Outcome sought by Complainant	
12. Any support requirements needed by the enquirer or Complainant	
13. The process of investigation to resolve the Noise Complaint	<i>See Appendix B.</i>
14. Any other relevant information	

Appendix B - BHWF Noise Complaints Investigation and assessment Process

