Snowtown Wind Farm II

Newsletter Edition

7

May 2020

A lot has happened since the Snowtown 2 Wind Farm became fully operational in 2014. When it came online, combined with Snowtown 1 Wind Farm, they formed the biggest operating wind farm site in South Australia with a total combined capacity of 370MW.

Redefining Snowtown as the 'wind capital' of the state, the annual output of the combined Snowtown wind farms is over 1,200GWh of renewable energy, powering over 200,000 South Australian homes and offsetting nearly one million tonnes of CO2 produced by thermal electricity generation.

Snowtown 2 Wind Farm alone has offset approximately 3.6 million tonnes of CO2 since 2014 – a huge achievement in advancing towards a clean energy future, providing electricity for South Australians at a very low cost.

TILT RENEWABLES, NOW WITH PALISADE INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT SERVICES (PIMS), IS PROUD TO BE A PART OF THE SNOWTOWN COMMUNITY.

Tilt Renewables will continue this connection through its ongoing ownership of the Snowtown 1 Wind Farm and is pleased to be joined by the new owners of Snowtown 2 Wind Farm to further develop these important community relationships.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the community for their support over the years and look forward to the years ahead, sharing responsibility for the Lend a Hand Foundation and seeing community projects come to fruition.

INTRODUCING PALISADE INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT SERVICES (PIMS)

On 17 December 2019, Snowtown 2 Wind Farm was sold to Australian superannuation fund investors whose investment is managed by Palisade Investment Partners Ltd (PIPL), Health Employees Superannuation Trust Australia (HESTA) and First State Super.

The wind farm is currently undergoing transition from Tilt Renewables until 30 June 2020. Following this transition period, PIMS will undertake the role of the Asset Manager for Snowtown 2 Wind Farm on behalf of the superannuation fund investors.

PIMS is a wholly owned subsidiary of PIPL, who manage infrastructure assets in order to achieve consistent long term returns for its investors. PIMS's suite of assets includes electrical generation, renewables (solar and wind), gas pipelines and rural livestock exchanges.

Asset Management at PIMS represents an ongoing commitment to safely optimize operations, minimize impact on the environment, maintenance for the life of the assets with a view to maximise earned value, while complying with all regulatory requirements.

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LEND A HAND FOUNDATION SNOWTOWN

The Snowtown Wind Farm 'Lend a Hand Foundation' is a committee that administers a $45,000 per annum community benefit fund. The committee is an independent group that lives and operates in the Snowtown area, and has been in existence since the beginning of the Snowtown Wind Farm, Stage 1.

The Lend a Hand Foundation provides support for local community projects, charities, schools and individuals when they need it most.

Following the sale of Snowtown 2 Wind Farm the Lend a Hand foundation will continue very much unchanged. Tilt Renewables, together with PIMS, will provide the funds for the community grant program.

Following recent consultation with landowners at the Snowtown wind farms, moving forward, the Lend a Hand Foundation committee, with the help of Tilt Renewables and PIMS, will ensure that the wider community is kept informed regarding which grant applications are successful, how the funds are distributed and the projects that have reached completion.

Examples of the initiatives from the past two years have included (but are not limited to):

- Snowtown Community Bus
- History Books for Brinkworth History Group
- Paving for the Mundoora Bowling Club
- Blyth Bowling Club Fridge
- Bute Lions Club Tree planting and painting power poles by the school
- Snowtown Primary School Oval sub surface water project

Other local community support initiatives have included the sponsorship of the concrete for the Snowtown skate park, installation of the big blade tourist attraction, local club and community sponsorships, native vegetation planting and cultural heritage initiatives. Projects like this mean that Tilt Renewables built more than wind farms and has developed long-term connections with the local community.

For more information and to apply for a Lend a Hand Foundation grant, visit:
www.snowtownwindfarm2.com.au or www.tiltrenewables.com

SPECIAL THANKS TO TIM MILLARD OF HILLSIDE PROPS

Since 2013, Tilt Renewables has been working with Tim Millard on the Snowtown 2 Wind Farm Significant Environmental Benefit (SEB) area. Also known as a native vegetation offset, they are established to compensate for biodiversity losses arising from native vegetation removal during construction.

Tim Millard owns and manages the offset site, established as a result of the Snowtown 2 Wind Farm development. At 104 hectares in size tending to the site takes a lot of work with objectives to:

1. Increase the health and number of native plants in the grassland
2. Reduce annual weed invasion
3. Adjust grazing regimes according to prevailing conditions to maximise the biodiversity value of the grassland and prevent overgrazing or preferential grazing in certain areas
4. Manage the grasslands to maintain and improve habitat for Pygmy Bluetongue Lizard (PBTL), which is critically endangered under the EPBC Act

We asked Tim to reflect on the past seven years and share the what he has learnt in the process.

Since the Snowtown 2 Wind Farm Significant Environmental Benefit (SEB) area was established, how would you describe the site then to what it is now?

Historically this area was grazed intermittently as one vast 200ha open space with only one watering point. It's now divided into twelve different cells, each having watering points.

Where the initial water trough was, to the southern end of the site, the sheep tended to over-graze, baring out the pasture, whilst the pasture at the northern end had barely been touched. So, with the implementation of grazing cells, from then to now I would say there has been a large change in the pasture consistency across the SEB. We no longer see large bare areas or sheep tracks through the pasture, or huge amounts of dead litter on the ground where the sheep chose not to graze.
That has gone as they are encouraged to move through the whole SEB via planned grazing.

What have been the most significant challenges you've faced in managing the site?

With the exception of the initial setup of the fencing and watering points, each year I find it a challenge matching the stock density (Dry Sheep Equivalent - DSE) to the seasonal fluctuations in pasture growth rates. While we have tools that help us predict many weeks in advance of what the food on offer (FOO) will be, it's not without its flaws. Juggling stock numbers to make sure you aren't over grazing the SEB yet utilising what feed is there is the annual challenge.

Managing annual weeds has been another significant challenge and a time-consuming battle. The aim is to eradicate these annual weeds while preserving the native perennials that are surrounding them. We aren't there yet, and it will be an ongoing task, but year by year we are getting seed bank numbers down.

What have been the biggest successes (i.e. different tactics/strategies applied, rehabilitation in certain areas)?

After the first few years seeing juvenile tussocks and other native herbaceous plants growing in areas you had never seen, that feels like a real win. Having the ability to rest vulnerable areas at different times has been quite valuable for the overall health of the SEB. Remaining flexible with the stock density (DSE) helps maintain larger rest periods between each graze, which has helped with pasture recovery and seedling recruitment.

Can you briefly describe the grazing regime / rotation and how this beneficially impacts the biodiversity value of the grasslands?

The stock are moved through the SEB on a planned grazing regime, where the time the stock are in each cell is dictated by the cell size, food on offer (FOO) and the stock density (DSE). They might spend anywhere between 2-5 days in a cell and then get moved onto the next cell. The aim being for each cell to have enough rest by the time the stock are due to return to graze that cell again.

Depending on the season the stock would be rotated through the SEB anywhere from 1-5 times throughout the winter. Whilst most cells are of a similar size (10Ha), their terrain, pasture variety and quantity are all varied so the planned graze needs to be tailored.

Would you say that the numbers for the critically endangered Pygmy Blue Tongue Lizard have increased since 2013?

This is something that I can't really comment on. Unless I am actively looking for them and checking holes it's not something you can tell from above ground. I have seen many in holes over the years but only one above ground. Years ago, we had an ecologist take counts and tag locations so I would need them to revisit now to get an idea of any progress there.

It has been discussed by the Mid-North Grasslands Working Group that grazing has been on sites where they have found many Pygmy Blue Tongue Lizards. They seem to survive at moderate levels of grazing. This project would be on the higher end of moderate grazing at times so it would be good to know the long-term impacts if any. They are sporadic over the SEB but have larger numbers in two cells, those ones in particular we are mindful not to overgraze.

Continued on the back page...

Tim Millard pictured left

Thank you

From your opinion, how would you describe offset sites and their purpose?

I see offset sites as opportunistic, for both the individual landholder of the project and the company intending to offset. If it's of an overall benefit to the environment, there is big incentive there for both parties to work together.

Lastly, what would you say are the biggest impacts to the degradation of, and ability to improve, the SEB area (i.e. lack of rain, prolonged draught, etc)?

Lack of rain and prolonged drought would be the big ones for degradation of the SEB regardless of stock. A lack of soil moisture going into summer and summer rain reduces the ability for many native tussocks to set seed, which hurts future recruitment.

Overgrazing definitely has another big impact on the health of the SEB. This occurs especially when the pasture already has drought stress. With the nature of having larger numbers of stock on smaller areas, moving times are critical. A matter of hours can be the difference in overgrazing or not.

Thank you Tim for all of your hard work.

MEET THE SIEMENS GAMESA TEAM

The crew operating Snowtown 2 Wind Farm, day to day, from left to right:

- Ryan Rodda: Service Contractor; Electrician from Kadina
- Rhys Colquhoun: Service Technician; Electrician from Port Broughton
- Braden Frost: Service Technician; Boiler maker from Kadina
- Brad Lane: Technical Support from Clare
- Brodi O'Brien: Service Technician; Boiler maker from Kadina
- Alex Brock: Service Technician; Diesel mechanic from Port Pirie
- Joel Moyle: Service Technician; Mechanic from Kadina
- Hayden Schutz: Logistics Coordinator; Diesel mechanic from Clare
- Grant Neale: Site Supervisor; Diesel mechanic from Parsons Beach
- Glenn Lane: Service HV Operator (missing)
- Tony Ellerton: Service Technician (missing)

SEB site pictured above - moving sheep from cell #1 to cell #12

For more information, enquiries or to provide feedback:
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