

## Wind farms guaranteed by taxpayers before environmental assessment

By [MATTHEW DENHOLM](#)



Listen to this article

5 min



 Gift this article

 146 Comments

A Queensland community fighting to save virgin woodland and threatened species from a wind developer's bulldozers has been horrified to discover the project is being underwritten by taxpayers – despite not yet securing environmental approval.

Climate Change and Energy Minister Chris Bowen earlier in October announced taxpayers would underwrite 20 further renewable energy projects, via the government's Capacity Investment Scheme, as it attempts to reach its renewables target.

The Weekend Australian can confirm a quarter of these – five projects – are still being “actively assessed” under federal environment law, to determine if their environmental impacts are acceptable, or not.



The site for a proposed 60-turbine wind farm, with turbine tip heights up to 275m, at Moah Creek, Central Queensland.

Those awaiting a green light under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act include the 60-turbine Moah Creek Wind Farm, 30km west of Rockhampton, in Central Queensland.

Residents said the decision to underwrite the project, which will have potentially “significant impacts” on native flora as well as koalas and greater gliders, totally undermined the environmental approval process.

“Underwriting a project that hasn’t even been approved yet gives everyone the concern that this is just going to be pushed through regardless,” said resident Leanne Sedgman, a Kalapa and Wycarbah Local Action Committee member.

“It makes us feel those approval processes are just there as a box-ticking exercise, to make it look like they’re doing the right thing.”



Site of the proposed Moah Creek Wind Farm and associated infrastructure, Central Queensland. Picture: Michael Seebeck.

Ms Sedgman said it also made a mockery of Mr Bowen’s statement to parliament last week that renewables projects in the “wrong places ... won’t get approved”.

The group, backed by conservationists, questions the probity of selecting projects for underwriting when their environmental impact is yet to be assessed.

“We urge Chris Bowen to come here and to see how many families live within proximity to this project, and to see the destruction that will happen,” Ms Sedgman said.

“This is not the right place. This country has never been cleared. The tops of those mountains are going to be bulldozed, blown up and flattened.

“That will cause erosion that will flow into our properties and creeks, and ultimately get into the Fitzroy River. Animals will be displaced. This is prime koala habitat but they (the government) don’t want to know about it.”



The site for a proposed 60-turbine wind farm, with turbine tip heights up to 275m, at Moah Creek, Central Queensland.

However, a government spokesperson said all CIS contracts “include a series of milestones that must be satisfied before revenue underwriting can commence, including securing all necessary approvals, such as EPBC”.

Four more of the latest CIS projects are also under active federal environmental assessment: Bell Bay Wind Farm, northern Tasmania; Bendemeer solar and battery energy hub, NSW; Dinawan Wind Farm, NSW, and; Hexham Wind Farm, Victoria. Others appear yet to even apply for approval.

As well as concerns about a perceived undermining of the EPBC process, questions have been raised about how the selection of projects yet to receive approvals will assist in hastening the renewables rollout.

The underwritten projects – providing a floor price for their power, guaranteed by taxpayers – have a competitive advantage in seeking investors and finance, compared to projects not selected but which may potentially be less damaging.

Mr Bowen expanded the CIS earlier in 2025 to 40 gigawatts, as the government seeks to achieve its ambitious target of 82 per cent renewables by 2030.



The site for a proposed 60-turbine wind farm, with turbine tip heights up to 275m, at Moah Creek, Central Queensland.

Announcing the latest 20 projects on October 9, Mr Bowen said the scheme was “popular and competitive, delivering cheaper, cleaner and more reliable energy for all Australians for years to come”.

However, there is mounting concern among communities, ecologists and conservationists that the rollout is occurring without sufficient checks and balances to protect biodiversity, agricultural land and regional amenity.

Concerns or calls for better planning have been raised by the [Biodiversity Council](#), former Greens leader [Christine Milne](#), Greens senators [Peter Whish-Wilson](#) and [Nick McKim](#), former Wilderness Society national campaigns director [Amelia Young](#), the Australian Conservation Foundation and the WWF.

There is concern the current EPBC Act allows projects to proceed even when they will have acknowledged “significant impacts” on threatened species, and gives too much weight to offsets and management plans.



Site for the proposed Moah Creek Wind Farm and associated infrastructure, Central Queensland. Picture: Michael Seebeck.

Moah Creek Wind Farm would directly impact up to 791ha, including the removal or fragmentation of 473ha of habitat for the threatened plant cycas megacarpa, with the “direct removal” of 471 individual plants.

As well, its proponent – Central Queensland Power Development Co – acknowledges it could “significantly impact” the koala community by clearing about 420ha of “habitat considered ... critical to the survival of the species”.

Similarly, it acknowledges the project “may have a significant impact on the greater glider” by destroying “habitat critical” to its survival.

The company argues it will adopt measures to “avoid, minimise and mitigate” these impacts, including using additional field surveys to fine-tune project design and via management plans.