

## Speech to IPC on the Hills of Gold Wind Farm: Dr David Beirman 01 Feb 2024

Ladies and Gentlemen, my name is Dr David Beirman. My wife, Liz and I have been property owners in Nundle since 2018 and resident here since 2020. This makes us relative newcomers to the community. We first visited Nundle in 2017 by accident and fell in love with village. We were inspired to settle in Nundle because of the sublime beauty of the region and its unspoiled Hills of Gold. We also love the communality of Nundle and we have quickly been accepted as part of the Nundle community.

The Orwellian (Hills of Gold Wind Farm) proposal to desecrate the magnificent Western ridge of the Great Dividing Range between Hanging Rock and Timor, on the “altar” of renewable energy for a short operational life of 25-30 years is an outrage. If I may paraphrase from His Majesty King Charles III, “our pristine landscape is set to defaced by 47 carbunkles”. Their construction will cause untold damage to the landscape, flora and fauna and will turn the “Hills of Gold” into the Hills of hideous spines. 47, 230 metre tall Turbines will be a blot on the landscape even after they cease operation and it’s left to landowners to determine the post-operational fate of the turbines. If this project is approved, the proponent will be permitted to damage our environment, erect the carbunkles and leave someone else to clean up the mess. What a very convenient proposal for the state government in Sydney to say they approve a temporary bandaid “solution” to fossil fuel dependence. If the NSW government is so keen on this type of project, let them stick a couple 230 metre high turbines (equivalent to the height of Sydney’s MLC Building) on top of the NSW Parliament house.

The proponents of this project claim widespread communal support for it. In their arrogance and hubris they believe that anyone they engage with is bedazzled by the brilliance of their case and swept up with enthusiasm for the magnificence of this project. The truth is that HOGPI’s figures demonstrate that close to 70% of the people in Nundle, Hanging Rock, Crawney and Timor oppose the project. These figures are substantially confirmed by two surveys conducted by Tamworth’s local State member of Parliament, Kevin Anderson which revealed that 58% opposed the project. Added to this is the firm opposition of Tamworth Regional Council. Yet, on the basis of political expedience for the benefit of its inner-city supporters, the NSW Labor government is determined to impose a short-term windfarm project on a community which clearly opposes it.

I have spent most of my professional life as either a tourism industry professional or a tourism academic. The proponent’s claim that the “wind farm” would be a tourism attraction is laughable. Based on empirical research conducted in Germany, Scotland and even the proponent’s own inclusion of a research assessment by a University of Newcastle scholar showed there is no evidence that the presence of a wind farm anywhere is seen as a tourism attraction for more than a miniscule minority of visitors to any of the many destinations worldwide which have them. Visually, the presence of the carbunkles (wind turbines) atop a natural ridge line would constitute a tourism deterrent. Few visitors to Nundle and surrounds who now come to see a natural landscape, are unlikely visit in the future to gasp in awe and wonder at 47 ugly wind turbines.

The IPC is well aware that there are places in NSW which welcome “wind farms” and rather than impose them on us, despoil our environment and divide our community they should focus on

areas which welcome them and incur far less damage during the construction phase than the environmental insanity of Nundle-Hanging Rock-Timor project as proposed.

So, if Wind farms are a deterrent to tourism in Nundle, and surrounds what will attract visitors, please most locals and enhance the economic benefits of increased visitation? A number of us, in Nundle and Tamworth are currently exploring the benefits of the area's potential Dark Sky status which has been enjoyed in Coonabarabran and the Warrumbungles National Park since 2016. The Weekend Australian Nov 18-19, 2023, published a major feature on astro tourism. Astro tourism is a proven success in attracting tourists to many parts of regional Australia. The Tamworth Regional Astronomy Club, Tamworth Regional Council and Marnie Ogg who an Astro-tourism Operator in partnership with her husband Fred Watson (Australia's most prominent astronomer) have discussed their shared enthusiasm for Nundle and surrounds as an Astro tourism centre with business people in Nundle on both sides of the wind farm debate. According to Marnie, who wrote Coonabarabran's successful application for Dark Skies status,(the first such region accredited in Australia) the Nundle-Timor region is currently perfect as a dark sky region which would attract thousands of domestic and international tourists. The "wind farm" and its requirements for navigational lighting and flash lighting during the construction phase would, at best, compromise the area's eligibility for "dark skies status". The evidence shows that the majority of our community prefer tourists to Nundle, Hanging Rock and the ridges to Timor to be attracted by our region's magnificent natural assets. We oppose it being ruined by a project which would despoil our environment and damage its visual beauty. Nundle's natural beauty should not be sacrificed to satisfy the unthinking mania for renewable energy at any cost on the part of the, state Labor government, the enviro fascist Gangrenes and other WOKE folk in Sydney's Inner City electorates who are unlikely to countenance such developments in their own backyards.

Thanks for listening and I sincerely hope the IPC shows it's truly independent and rejects this abominable proposal.