

I have previously submitted an **objection** to the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) regarding the proposed **Hills of Gold Wind Farm**. Following the assessment process, my opinion remains the same, having further concerns that this project is a **huge risk factor for the Government of NSW, ENGIE and the local community and surrounds**.

Nineteen years ago our family purchased a small historical property along the Peel River at Bowling Alley Point, north of the proposed site. Shortly after, the property was earmarked for possible resumption by State Water to make way for the Augmentation/Upgrade of the Chaffey Dam (also a Project of State Significance). For many years improvements or enhancement to our property were put on hold as we awaited confirmation of whether our dwellings and land would be resumed. It took almost 9 years for this to be confirmed. A similar situation is currently affecting many of the residents in Nundle & Hanging Rock...**life changing decisions have been put on hold.**

Residents need to know the Hills of Gold Wind Farm does not have the IPC's approval so they can get on with planning their future.

**I believe the following points should be considered by the IPC when assessing the determination of the Hills of Gold Wind Farm;**

**1. Outside allocated REZs**

The project does not fall within the designated REZs and sets a worrying precedent for others to follow. This example makes all of us question why these zones exist. Many people choose to live outside these REZs for a reason and their choice should not be compromised.

**2. Offsets**

The value that the residents of Nundle, Hanging Rock & surrounds place on the existing natural pristine and pastoral landscape is supported by the number of submissions opposing the project. The industrial nature and overpowering scale of the visual impacts, and the damage this will do to the biodiversity, river systems and landscape are not something that can be reversed or compensated by offsets.

**3. Risk Assessment**

Independent reports and local knowledge provided in submissions indicate that the site is unsuitable for a Wind Farm of this magnitude. I urge the IPC to not 'future guess' what will happen but consider all risk factors presented to them in the previous and final submissions.

**4. Effects of the unpredictable**

Damaging weather events have started bushfires, caused major flooding, and in the process altered (in some cases destroyed) the bio-diversity of many areas in NSW. The recent fire in the Pilliga is such an event. What percentage of this is taken into consideration by the IPC when considering Projects of State Significance (as a collective) and the overall damage they cause to the bio-diversity and community? When these major projects are added together conjointly with the naturally occurring events, the result is fundamental. Whilst I understand the job of the IPC is to consider approval for this project only, I ask that the 'big picture' also be contemplated and not just the micro management of this particular one, for the benefit of future generations.

## 5. **Biodiversity**

I am not against renewable energy however, the renewable energy benefits of this large scale project cannot be realised without having an adverse impact on the environment and its bio-diversity, even with the reduced number of 47 turbines.

## 6. **Site location**

Whilst the desirability of the location for a wind farm is recognised by some, this somehow needs to be balanced against the environmental and social impacts it poses. All evidence so far indicates this is not the right site. A wind farm is not the ideal neighbour for a Nature Reserve or National Park (designated conservation areas) or small historical tourism towns like Nundle & Hanging Rock.

## 7. **Invaluable local knowledge**

The lasting effects placed on the lives of many families in the community who have worked tirelessly to express their 'invaluable' knowledge and strong passion for why this project should be rejected ought to be given valid consideration by the IPC.

## 8. **Community Division**

Ruination of a community stirs division and causes an end to the meaning of 'mateship'. Small towns like Nundle and Hanging Rock are not immune to such behaviour. This project is causing distress and angst. Lives have been put on hold, others live in hope, whilst others have chosen (or will choose) to move on.

## 9. **Community Funding and Community Enhancement Funds**

Companies (such as ENGIE) needing to sponsor community organisations and hold no conscience about offering community grants prior to project approval can only be seen as bribing residents to gain local support. This shows a complete lack of authenticity and credibility; and I ask that the IPC consider this and prevent it from occurring on other such projects. 'Dangling the carrot' should not be the approach for Projects of State Significance, especially before approval has been publicly granted.

What chance does the community have of agreeing about allocated Community Enhancement Funding when there is such division within the community. Tamworth Regional Council have expressed their concern over this proposal even though they gain to receive part of this funding. I think this says a lot!

## 10. **Overall Visual impact**

The size and number of proposed turbines is not something that can be hidden behind screening. The topography of the land prohibits this.

Confrontation by the many turbines along the top of the range, alongside the large scale transmission lines as you approach the project site from the Timor Crawney Rd (heading north), Lindsays Gap Road (heading East), and Nundle Road from Tamworth (heading South) will be unmissable. Without a doubt, the visual impact will be seen from kilometres away.

## 11. **Visual impact on the Great Dividing Range**

Over the years I have enjoyed viewing the magnificent Great Dividing Range from a distance, and have captured many images of this to share with others. The changing seasons glorify it in its true beauty, the view is priceless.

It's named the GREAT DIVIDING Range simply because it is!

If the IPC allows this monumental icon to be altered by this one project what reassurance do we have that the whole of the Great Dividing Range will not be altered in the same way? It should be preserved so future generations can learn about the important significance of this range as I did when I was a child, and continue to enjoy its beauty throughout the changing seasons.

**12. Viability**

The allocated REZs provide other more suitable sites for Wind Farms than this one. At what point does a site become **not viable?** Who will bear the cost of accidental failure should this be the case? What ramification will this have on future Renewable Energy projects planned within the state of NSW?

**13. Increased local traffic**

The increased traffic flow to a small town like Nundle by trucks & oversized vehicles can only mean one thing.....a distraction. Presently when a logging truck passes through Nundle you can hardly hear yourself speak. Ask anyone who has tried to hold a conversation.....a pause, and then you continue. Multiply this by the number of trucks and trade vehicles expected per day for two years or more. The danger of sharing the roads with some of these is frightening.

**14. Full transparency of future planning**

Complete transparency and detailed information relating to the full scope of work should be tabled by ENGIE ie. possible further stages of this project in years to come. The reduction in turbines for Stage 1 could be a smokescreen for more Stages to go ahead in the near future. The IPC's decision should be taking this into consideration at this early phase, asking the question and advising the community so they can make life decisions based upon this. The number of proposed turbines (47 or 62?) in the latest proposal just don't seem to stack up.

**15. Impacts on Nundle - our closest community**

It takes me 7mins to drive into Nundle, the closest community to us. My family and friends enjoy the Nundle and Hanging Rock areas because they offer culture, history, arts, music, workshops, food and wine events, nature, fossicking, fishing, boating, camping, kayaking, foraging, sightseeing, campdrafting, dog races amongst other things. These attributes are what attracted us to the area in the first instance. Our friends & family love to visit because of these many offerings. The impact the wind farm will have on the Nundle community will be a negative one, affecting tourism, social events and activities.

**16. Night Sky**

The amazing night sky is an astonishing experience, mesmerising!  
You can't miss it. It shouldn't be tampered with, instead kept for those who love it.

**17. Impact on local Business**

Tourism is a key part of the survival of Nundle. Any impact to this could upset the fragility of existing local businesses, some may even close. The reliance on food banks (backed by ENGIE) may then become the norm for everyone. This can't be underestimated by the IPC.

Whilst there is hope that more food and beverages will be sold in Nundle during construction, its highly unlikely workers will travel down the mountain for lunch given the number of transport vehicles, road blocks, inclement weather (fog, rain or snow) they will possibly encounter - all within their allocated lunchtime.

**18. Accommodation for workers**

Housing & Rental properties are scarce in the area of Nundle. The proposed workers and their families (should they choose to live close to work and support the local community) will struggle finding suitable accommodation. To increase school numbers a community needs families, families need housing. With a shortage of trades and an increase to building supply costs, I can't imagine any new housing being built immediately to address this shortage.

## 19. **Job prospects for locals**

What guarantee do locals have for job prospects and in what capacity?

Going back to my experience with the Chaffey Dam Augmentation I find it hard to believe that the increase of job prospects for locals is still being used as a reason for this project to proceed. We attended numerous site meetings at the Chaffey Dam in the course of construction. The contractors awarded the project used mainly contract staff, many who travelled from Newcastle, Sydney, Armidale & even WA. Others we spoke to came from overseas. I recall a surveyor who had flown in the week before from the North of England, another from Germany. During our conversation with him a brown snake slithered past us and he commented "I learnt about them in site safety training yesterday but didn't think I'd see one". This is a real example of who gets to be employed. How many local jobs will there really be considering experience and expertise to be an essential prerequisite on such a unique and significant project.

## 20. **Budget blowouts and cost savings**

I would also like to remind the IPC of the scenario regarding the saving of funds required for the Chaffey Dam Upgrade after the tendered cost came in above budget. State Water was looking at savings that could be made to allow the project to proceed. One of those savings was to not proceed with the relocation of the Western Foreshore Road, part of which has now been inundated with the new Full Supply Level of the dam. This has left six properties directly affected by the road closure.

Reference - [https://trrra.org.au/west-bank-road-at-chaffey-dam/?doing\\_wp\\_cron=1707097603.2771399021148681640625](https://trrra.org.au/west-bank-road-at-chaffey-dam/?doing_wp_cron=1707097603.2771399021148681640625)

The original river road remains in front of our place. For years we were reassured it would be removed after the new road was built, it never was. Today it remains an eyesore surrounded by introduced weeds because there were no funds left.

Due to the uncertainty of so many facets of the Hills of Gold Wind Farm to date, **the budget is a huge question mark**. If/when savings are required (**after the tender process**) where will these be made? Roads & kerbs, bridges, screening, steel fabrication, concrete batching, quality of steel fabrication, widening or water dampening of roads, soil and erosion prevention,...the list goes on. Or will it come out of the offsets and site remediation funding? Full transparency is imperative before commencement as there is no turning back once the project has commenced.

## 21. **Monetary gains**

Wind farms do not attract tourists, and with more in the pipeline they will no longer be of interest to sightseers. If they were, who would conduct tours (as suggested by a host landholder)? Who would reap the monetary benefits of such an activity? Will host landowners have exclusive rights to these activities and monetary gains?

## 22. **Hydrology**

The 'unspeakable' impact to hydrology flows given the number of rivers affected - The Peel, The Barnard, The Isis & further downstream the Murray Darling catchment.

## 23. **Water usage and where it is sourced from.**

Water is a necessity on site for concrete batching, road construction, road dampening (dust mitigation), screening and landscaping, and not forgetting potable water for drinking. Wind causes dust and dust requires water....lots of it!

With several kilometres of roads planned the use of water will be immense. The water haulage trucks will clearly be an added obstacle. The Peel River and the Chaffey Dam should be off limits to water haulage trucks. Being the main water supply for Tamworth, the IPC is asked to consider flow and supply level changes of these, a factor which at times impacts the main water supply to the region.

24. **Proposed site security, exclusion zones & access**

What security measures would be instated around the perimeters of the site? Security fencing, lighting and cameras will be a blight on the landscape and access to the site will be compromised in emergencies such as bush fires, flooding and human or animal misadventure.

25. **Decommissioning, Maintenance and Rehabilitation**

The rehabilitation of the roads and replanting of vegetation will take time. The community will relive this experience every time maintenance occurs and in years to come when decommissioning starts. This will be a continual disruption to the community. In the process, introduced weeds and plant growth is a real possibility.

26. **Traffic Disruptions and Hazards**

The larger vehicles sharing the roads with normal traffic pose an added risk (especially to the elderly & school buses) and will add additional time to travel expectations. 'Stop and go' lights generally are part of road upgrades and to have these in place on the many main roads and back roads from Newcastle to the Upper Hunter and then into Nundle is absurd. Expect delays! Surely this will impact tourism.

27. **Overall Majority decision throughout the planning process**

The proponent promised "that if the majority say no, then the project will not go ahead". The DPE has not taken this into consideration when recommending this project for approval. It is now up to the IPC to consider the hard work, dedication and passion that the majority have put into submissions to give the IPC a clearer understanding as to why this project **SHOULD NOT** be approved.

28. **Trust**

ENGIE was asked "Will there be more stages to this project in the future?" At the time, the answer was "NO". Why should the community of Nundle & surrounds trust the feedback given by ENGIE when so far we have been presented with very limited information, in some cases none.

29. **Consultation process**

As a resident of Bowling Alley Point I feel I have been ignored throughout the planning process. I/we have never been consulted about this project? We have a letterbox on the roadside and the Pony Express goes past regularly. To date we have not received a single document regarding this project. Some regional areas rely on mail. If our rates can get to us then so can important information such as this. The consultation inadequacy by the proponent should be factored into the process of future proposals such as this. Also, we didn't receive Kevin Anderson's survey, which makes me wonder who else didn't have the option to participate.

**CONCLUSION**

The assessment (benefits versus risk factors) is a huge undertaking for the IPC. On behalf of this small rural community I ask that all factors be given careful analysis and the risk assessment be scrutinised. Budget blowouts are commonplace....If the IPC gets this one wrong the future of other renewable projects could be jeopardised.

What percentage of damage is considered acceptable for this project in addition to unpredictable, spontaneous natural events which seem to be occurring regularly?

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Should approval be granted I believe the community will witness a design far from the one tabled to the IPC. There are too many unknown issues and a 'design as you go' attitude by ENGIE is unacceptable. **How many variations will there be to rectify the unknown and what impact will this have on the budget and the end result?** I ask that the IPC consider this as a major factor against this project.

Please don't let the residents of Nundle, Hanging Rock and surrounds fight any more battles. The community who opposes this awaits your decision after years of angst and deserves a positive outcome.

I remain optimistic that the IPC will consider the **unsuitability and high risk nature of this project** when determining their decision, and realise they will remain responsible for future outcomes and consequences.

The Hills of Gold Wind Farm **SHOULD NOT PROCEED** and **I FIRMLY OBJECT** to any further conditions of consent being granted. The project should be rejected in its entirety.

Landowner  
Bowling Alley Point NSW 2340