

Greensplaining

/ˈɡriːnspleɪnɪŋ/

noun

INFORMAL

1. the explanation of something by a 'green' credentialed' organisation, typically patronising, to the public, community or individual, in a manner that attempts to enhance the environmental advantages of a project, initiative or brand. Usually in an attempt to deliberately distract from the underlying significant environmental and social damage this activity would cause (is causing). See: 'greenwash'
2. A form of advertising or marketing spin in which green PR and green marketing are deceptively used to persuade the public that an organisations products, aims, and policies are environmentally friendly.

"Engie greensplained the merits of the project, using typical buzz words like "emissions targets", "economic growth" and "off-sets"; excluding from the narrative pertinent information on the environmental damages that would enable them to achieve their objectives."

"Engie greensplained the renewables targets their project would achieve would be significant to the broader public interest, in so doing obfuscating the significant impact the project would have on rare biodiverse habitats, endangered and listed species, cultural and natural heritage and social amenity."

Synonyms: greenwash, green speak, green sheen, pulling-the-wool

I returned to Nundle from Sydney in 2017, after living and working overseas for more than a decade, to start a small artistic business which operates as a gallery and studio in the heart of the village. I have a long association with Nundle – some of my earliest memories are of summer days camping at the Fossickers Park, panning for gold, blackberry picking and swimming at the Nundle pool.

I returned to Nundle to escape an industrial environment, to feed my creative life and actively choose to be connected to an environment that inspires my art and my sense of belonging and place. To have this pristine, beautiful range and valley threatened with the prospect an industrial wind farm towering on our landscape, scarring our mountains, destroying native flora and fauna, and industrialising our small village is devastating. What Engie is proposing to do to our landscape is prioritise the drive for renewables at any cost, even if that means enacting harm to the land, skies, waterways and community.

In their presentation to the IPC, Engie has concluded that the DPHI overstates visual impact and asserts that the department does not "balance visual impact against the broader public interest in accordance with existing case law".

I believe it's important to acknowledge that (I believe) there is also existing case law supporting a community's and an individual's right to amenity and this case law seeks to articulate and enshrine the definition of amenity:

Wall QC DCJ said in *Mills & Ors v Townsville City Council & Anor* [2003] QPEC 008 said at page 36-37;

"Amenity is the benchmark by which other discreet issues are considered and assessed. Traffic, noise, setbacks, landscaping, roads, access, design, size, bulk, height, appearance, views, ridgelines, building envelopes, verandahs, footpaths, open space, recreational areas and the like are all more or less relevant by reference to amenity in that they are factors by which the affect which a proposal will have on the community and the surrounding area and how it will fit into and impact on that environment is measured.

The most important part of that environment is the community: the people, the families, the businesses which live and work and coexist in it. They are in fact the environment, the area, the envelope or the footprint in which a proposal must take its place, fit into and be compatible with.

...ultimately the decision should be concerned with the community's welfare and the community's interests, not just the interests of the applicant for development approval or the submitters against development approval. Planning schemes are community documents which must be interpreted by reference to the relevant community. They do not exist in a vacuum divorced from the community which generate them. They order that community."

To weigh the visual impact of this project against broader public interest (of NSW residents) truly seeks to undervalue, negate and ignore the value, meaning and amenity we, as a local community, myself (as an individual) and our many visitors, hold for this place. The expectations we hold as a community living in this landscape are not to be dismissed so easily. A project of this scale would be devastating to my amenity, it does not sit in appropriate scale to the villages and current land use nor does it meet the requirements of the SEARS issued.

It is unreasonable in the extreme to thrust a project of this scale onto a community of people who have consistently demonstrated our objection to this proposal. This is evidenced not only by the statistics alone (in our responses to the two exhibition periods) but by the well reasoned, evidenced concerns, issues and omissions we have raised throughout the 6 years of this project's drawn-out application. The IPC was another (and distressingly, final) iteration of trying to have our voices heard and acknowledged. This project does not have social licence. We are not simply NIMBY's, our "backyard" holds precious attributes that need to be seriously acknowledged and factored into the public interest argument.

There is compelling public interest in preserving our heritage, protecting our endangered species, and preserving our wild and semi-wild spaces for future generations. This is our asset to broader NSW. We may not be able to put a dollar figure on it, but maybe one day in the future, when all else is developed in the name of renewables and progress, we can look at Nundle, Hanging Rock, Crawney and Timor as a bastion of nature, of dark night skies, of eagles soaring without danger, of crystal clear waterways flowing down from

the mountains, of fresh air and sweeping vistas...Maybe there *will* be a dollar figure by then, and maybe it will be priceless.

But in the present? I believe Nundle and Hanging Rock are on-par with Hill End inasmuch as meeting the values of a conservation area. We hold national cultural significance due to our aesthetic, historic, scientific and social value to past, present and future generations of Australians and we deserve to have these assets protected unequivocally. I ask the IPC to acknowledge and act on this. Surely destroying our environment and heritage in the name of saving the environment is an absurd and sad contradiction we have a chance to correct.

If this project goes ahead, I can only surmise that nowhere will be protected, no landscape, no biodiverse habitats, no First Nations and European heritage, no community. The Hills of Gold Wind Farm will be the beginning of a slippery slope to losing our precious environmental and community assets across this state, there will be no chance of protections from the spectre of development in the name of money and progress. If the IPC can see the evidence and STILL rule in this proposal's favour – I believe we will have reached a crossroads from which we cannot return.

The Department has seriously underrepresented the impacts this proposal will have to our amenity. Yes, I am happy they have removed turbines from the design based on visual and noise impacts, but I would ask they remove all the turbines boarding Ben Halls Gap Nature Reserve and Ben Halls National Park. I believe the DPHI have been remiss in sanctioning the transport route, both on the ridgeline and through our villages and not insisting on visual impact and noise assessments to be completed for the villages.

There is significant confusion about which roads they have recommended for OSOM vehicles, as the DPHI seem to have added a route via the Devil's elbow, Barry Road and Morrisons Gap Road – (which was previously ruled out as an option) alongside the "Nundle Bypass" using Crawney road. Both options pose significant and unresolvable problems and have not been assessed adequately. The community has not been furnished with visual impact montages of these roads nor noise assessments conducted for residents of Jenkins street (to name but a few omissions). I ask the IPC to consider the impacts of industrial OSOM vehicles and roads (and other construction vehicles) cutting through our tiny village, the removal of much-loved old trees, the safety of our children, the irreparable damage to our village character – not to mention the transport routes scarring the ridgeline along with the associated infrastructure. There are no protections for the character of Nundle, Hanging Rock, Crawney and Timor – we are effectively being asked to accept the redefinition of our village and our lives as we know them.

I have continually expressed to the DPHI and the proponent the value I place on this environment and community. I have asked (and now ask the IPC) to extend the visual impact zone to 20kms to include the entrance to Nundle. I consider once turning onto the bridge at Bowling Alley Point, the moment at which I am entering Nundle and returning

home. I will never tire of seeing the breathtaking range unfolding before my eyes in all seasons as I drive along Nundle Road.

I would like to quote a case which refers to the concept of 'reasonableness' in relation to amenity and planning controls, and I quote:

Acland Pastoral Co Pty Ltd v Rosalie Shire Council (2007) QPEC. Dodds DCJ:

"Consideration of amenity in a town planning context is not in the abstract. It is informed by the planning controls applying in the area under consideration and the notion of reasonableness"

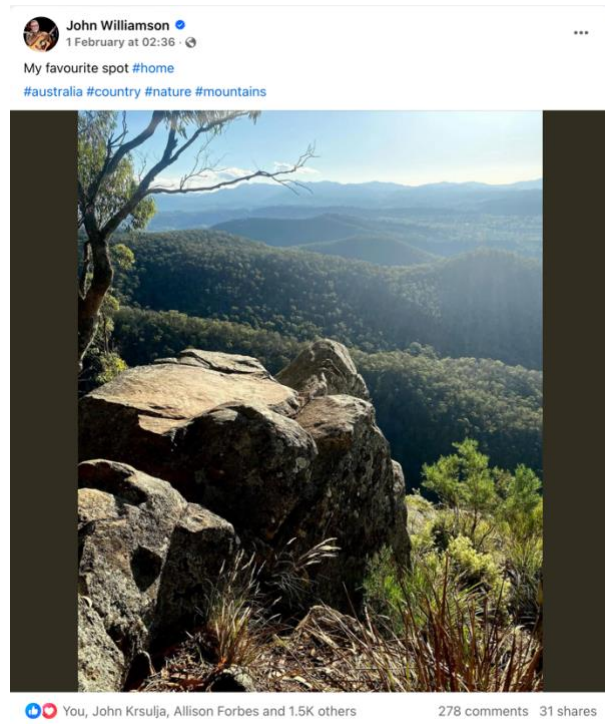
Asking our community to bear the consequences of an industrial development which will irrevocably change the character, use and value of our villages is the definition of UNREASONABLENESS. Our community has been put through so much turmoil in the many iterations of this proposal, it has created internal conflict, division and has grossly impacted our contentment and ability to enjoy our environment. The proponent has conducted itself without integrity and has been the bad seed that bears no fruit in our community – in fact it's been a weed that has made us sick. And to think we are now facing Engie's request that the IPC grant a voluntary land acquisition condition (an oxymoron if there ever was one), instead of adopting DPHI's recommendation! How far will they go?!

There is poetry here, it is evident in the way the clouds form as mountains rising above and cloaking the ridgeline, sweeping around the valley and creating majestic temples in the sky. It is in the way the golden sun illuminates the hills as you are returning home at dusk. It is in the laughter of children as they play on their bikes in the middle of the main street...it is anywhere you care to look. If you're so inclined.

How do you measure the value of a poem? An artwork? A song? A sense of community? A sense of belonging? A sense of wonder and discovery? A sense of pride in witnessing the earth do what it does best, exist and flourish without the trespass of the industrial?

You simply cannot. This place is the source of my creative life: Nundle, Hanging Rock, Crawney and Timor. It is my Australian heartland and my muse.

And of course, not only for me...for many, many artists and creatives. In early February (2024) not long after the Tamworth Country Music Festival, John Williamson - celebrated musician, renowned conservationist and recipient of the Order of Australia ("for service to Australian country music and in stimulating awareness of conservation issues") posted a photograph from the Hanging Rock lookout, simply describing it as "my favourite spot #home". The view this picture captures is of the proposed project area and, if approved,

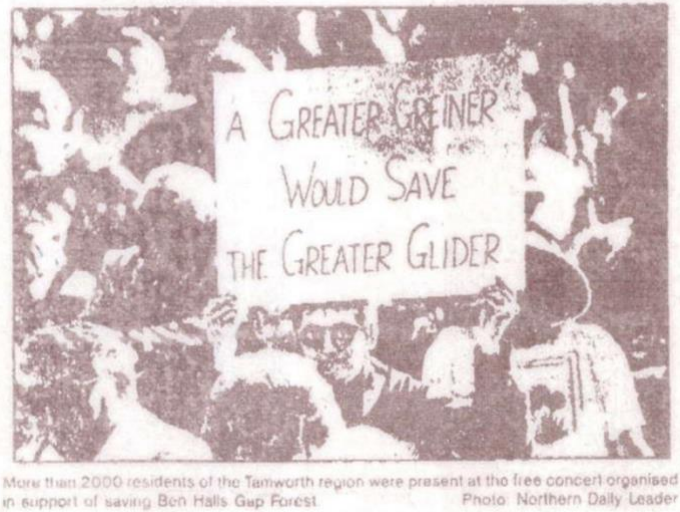


will have turbines towering over this vast and sweeping vista.

To put this post into context, in 1989 John was part of a number of large public conservation campaigns specifically for the protection of oldgrowth forests throughout north-east NSW including Ben Halls Gap (State Forest, at the time). In June 1989 John held a benefit concert in Tamworth for Ben Halls Gap – raising awareness of the Forestry Commissions intention to construct roads and commence logging to clear "2910 hectares of oldgrowth forest for the doubtful gain of some 43,220 gross saw-logs" (National Parks Journal, 28.5.90). The culmination of the efforts of the local

community and the support (and profile) John lent to the campaign resulted in Ben Halls Gap being listed as a Nature Reserve in 1995. Protected for future generations.

Can you imagine what the state would have lost if this campaign had not, against all odds, succeeded? We would no longer have the BHG Nature Reserve as we know it, home to rare and critically endangered species. It is the habitat for the Barking Owl, Booroolong Frog, Border Thick-tailed Gecko, Eastern Cave Bat, Eastern Pygmy-possum, Greater Glider, Large-eared Pied Bat, Powerful Owl, Sooty Owl, Southern Myotis, Squirrel Glider, Masked Owl, Spotted-Tail Quoll, Koala, Little Eagle, Nankeen Kestrel, Square-tailed Kite, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Regent Honeyeater, Swift Parrot, Eucalyptus Oresbia, Ribbon Gum, Mountain Gum, Snow Gum, White Box-Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland (all listed in the EPBC Act).



A special mention would go to Ben Halls Gap Sphagnum Moss Cool Temperate Rainforest which was upgraded to Critically Endangered by the Commonwealth on 5th October, 2022.

It seems we are playing out the same iteration of a tired, age-old theme: an impassioned and caring public fighting to protect our environment from big industry and monied interests. Thank goodness we have been tireless in this fight. At least we will know we have done all that we can, whatever the outcome.

I don't know if John Williamson would still be able to call it "home" if this proposal is built. I don't know if any artist could, without feeling a deep sense of sadness for the magic we will have lost.

I would also like to quote landscape artist Luke Sciberras, who lives at Hill End and has visited Nundle:

"I find the prospect of Nundle being surrounded by wind turbines as preposterous as a Maccas at Uluru or an international airport on the shores of Sydney harbour . Nundle is a town held dearly in the hearts of a great many in the wider community because it has a beauty and culture all its own.

Wind farms have their place but must be placed discreetly and intelligently, you can't just move them around the landscape like chess pieces. The approach and surrounds of Nundle are known and celebrated by artists and visitors of all kinds and wind farms on the doorstep would not only destroy the natural and agricultural beauty of the place but render it a mere curiosity as tourists pass through, and keep driving."

I can only sadly agree with statement and my heart aches at the truth of it.

This proposal is clearly not appropriate. The DPHI's Assessment Report and Recommended Development Consent asks us to accept the impacts of 47 HUGE industrial turbines on a picturesque ridgeline which hugs the valley of Nundle – a breathtaking backdrop to our daily life. It asks us to accept turbines neighbouring Ben Halls Gap Nature Reserve and Ben Halls Gap State Forest, home to the Critically Endangered species, an environment so diverse and delicate we cannot begin to truly comprehend what Australia as a country loses if it were compromised. It asks us to accept that cash and stewardship can offset losing these environments, losing what we already have, what we should be the guardians of. It asks us to accept direct impacts to biodiverse habitats, red aviation lights illuminating our dark night skies, pollution to waterways, clearing of koala habitat, the industrialisation of our roads and character of our villages. No amount of money offered could ameliorate what has already been done to this community and what will be done to this community if this project goes ahead.

The way we value our landscape, our lifestyles, the AMENITY of our landscape and community, both tangible and intangible should be the benchmark by which this project's appropriateness is assessed.

In opposing this project, and the DPHI's recommendations, I am seeking to preserve our native flora and fauna habitats, our close-knit community, the tranquillity that's afforded in such a landscape, the livelihoods of many, our future water security, our unique heritage features and the beautiful, unpolluted dark night skies. Our landscape is not an inanimate backdrop to important human activity, it is a living, breathing entity much larger than this proposal or the DPHI's assessment can ever attempt to fathom.

I am a sister talking for this land, I am a voice for the voiceless. I am an artist who is witness. I remain in hope that I am heard, and I believe I stand on the right side of the equation when I request that the IPC unequivocally rejects the Hills of Gold Wind Farm.