

WIND FARM OBJECTION

My name is [REDACTED] and I have been a resident of Nundle for the last 18 years. I strongly object to the proposed Wind Farm Development due to its associated environmental, social and community damages and its lack of geographical suitability or engineering analysis. Below are my concerns and opinions of this project, many of which I have learned about through my Mechanical Engineering degree and experience within the civil construction industry.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT:

The proposed wind farm will have a devastating impact on the native Flora and Fauna not only within but also surrounding the proximity of the works. The proponent has identified numerous Fauna habitats, including many of which belong to threatened or endangered species that can only survive in specific and undisturbed conditions. Many Native Flora species have also been identified, some of which will be partially cleared, others completely cleared in order to begin construction. The clearing will not be localized, but rather extended outside of the project works boundaries to cut paths for things such as access tracks and off-site compounds. To even consider constructing a project of this size in the terrain suggested is completely ludicrous.

The suggested terrain borders national park area and nature reserves, and is positioned in extremely steep mountainous terrain, home to very unsuitable soil that is prone to slips and extreme erosion when disturbed. Not only is a high risk of land slips a degradation to the environment, it also poses a significant WH&S risk for both construction and maintenance of the Wind Farm. The size and physical nature of the machinery and the parts for the turbines mean that even a small slip could cause damage to expensive machinery and parts and cause injury or death to people nearby. Management plans for events such as land slips, flooding or extreme wind events will be extensive and hard to be cleared by the Independent Certifiers for the project.

The proposed area is all part of a huge catchment area for surrounding gullies and creeks that all eventually run into the Peel River, which I note is the main source of water for not only Nundle but Tamworth and surrounding areas. I have personally seen the effect of construction works and machinery operation in this area and the damage it has on Nundle Creek. Even small earthworks cause extreme run-off which turns the water brown and, in most cases, unusable for agricultural or personal purposes. Also of great concern are the waste products that will be created from the project, including oils, poisonous chemicals, battery waste and biodegrading vegetable matter. All these waste products end up in the river system, and eventually in the water that we drink. These matters alone are enough to make this project unviable, even without considering the social and community impacts. These are non-negotiable impacts, that cannot be simply overlooked or amended with change in operation of management plans. These impacts are permanent and cannot be rehabilitated and will cause extreme harm.

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY IMPACT:

This project has caused a significant amount of stress in many individuals, and the community as a whole. Regardless of opinion on the wind farm, it is undeniable that it has impacted many people mentally as they try to fit their everyday lives, families and jobs into a mix of meetings, reading engineering reports and drawings, researching laws and regulations, visiting site boundaries and keeping up to date with what is happening within the project.

It is my opinion that many people within Nundle have been supplied with misleading information surrounding the potential benefits of this project. The wind farm will NOT produce a significant amount of LOCAL job opportunities. Construction will be carried out mostly by external contracting services, all of which will be outsourced from other towns. Many of the operations are specialised, not general, and require very specific machinery and qualifications to perform. Maintenance of the turbines will likely be carried out by qualified personnel such as electrical and mechanical engineering teams. Simply turning up as a Nundle local and working on the project is not a realistic option. Training, inductions, recruitment, associated expenses and other complicated procedures are all being ignored by people who are pushing this idea of an influx of local jobs and opportunities.

I think that many people are being influenced by continuous offerings of personal and community financial gain. Engie does not care about the wellbeing of a tiny village in Australia, they are a multinational utility company with a market cap of close to 40 billion dollars, their concern is to make money, not peace within a small rural community. The community enhancement fund is also a very thrown around term in discussions. I think people are missing the fact that this figure is directly proportionate to the number of turbines in operation. This number of turbines is rapidly decreasing and is set to decrease again substantially in the next round of design. The Enhancement fund is simply a masked bribe to the community, that is set to reduce in size massively.

The tension and divide caused by this project is significant and will take time to repair. This divide has impacted many businesses around Nundle, friendship groups and committees. It will continue to do so if this ill-conceived project goes ahead. I also believe that many of the supporting opinions have been heavily influenced by the opportunity for financial gain, take away the money and these opinions disappear.

OTHER IMPACTS

The idea that we should trade off Nundle's natural untouched beauty and tranquil bushlands, attracting thousands of tourists each year for the sole purpose of relaxing in the quiet environment and enjoying the bush, and instead destroy this and build a big ugly industrial power facility is ridiculous. People will NOT travel to Nundle specifically to see a wind farm, in fact it will work quite oppositely. The wind farm will ruin the tranquil environment, and while many people will rebut this by saying that the wind farm is not within Nundle's direct locality, they fail to acknowledge the huge impact that the construction traffic will have on our local roads and centre of town.

The different transport routes that have been suggested are ridiculous, with plans to make huge changes to Nundle's current traffic flow and even remove trees and nature strips from the main street of the town. The roads are already narrow, dangerous, full of potholes, and busy during peak holiday hours. A surplus of huge heavy vehicles and machinery will make driving in Nundle a tedious and extremely dangerous task. Again, this is simply not an impact that can be ignored or amended in any way. It is tied to this project and will be a guaranteed, non-negotiable impact. All travel within Nundle will be affected, including parking. This will negatively affect the Peel Inn, Caravan Park, Woolen Mill, Nundle Fuel and Café, Gold Mine Café and other businesses quite dramatically.

The turbines will have an obvious visual impact on almost all residents within Nundle and Hanging Rock. They are visible from almost all parts of Nundle and surrounds and will be visible both day and night due to their flashing lights. The plan to plant trees in people's residences to block their view is completely unrealistic and ineffective.

I object to the proposed Hills of Gold Wind Farm due to its extensive associated social and environmental impacts on the land and community.