

Submission

NSW Government
Major Projects
Hills of Gold Wind Farm

It's hard to believe this inappropriate industrial proposal is still on the table for one of the most ecologically sensitive and picturesque landscapes of the world.

The threatened ridges and mountains of Hanging Rock and the surrounding range are the vital water recharge points where rainfall filters through the rocks and tree roots, moving down into the ground to the water table and aquifers in the valley catchments to the Barnard River to the east and the Peel River to the west, joining into the Namoi and continuing to the mighty Murray River. The Eastern Australian landscape, and all those who live there, depends on the flow of this water. Plugging up these recharge areas with a string of monolithic concrete platforms joined together with roads will prohibit the natural flow of water in these important Australian water systems.

The protection and conservation of the fragile ecological environment that is threatened by the development is of utmost importance. Specifically, the endangered and critically endangered flora communities, the endangered and critically endangered fauna, also the physical structure of the ridgelines and plateaus of the project area which perform the vital water *recharge* function as a source of the groundwater storages of the Hunter, Barnard and Peel river catchments.

Since the commencement of engagement with stakeholders in 2017, the situation for our wildlife has changed dramatically due to the Black Summer bushfires — one of the worst wildlife disasters in modern history. The koala has been identified as being vulnerable to extinction, with surveys by ecological consultancy Biolink, finding 71% of koala populations died in 6 study areas of NSW after the fires. As detailed in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), there are thirteen threatened terrestrial fauna species directly within the Development Footprint, including Koala.

The proposed works include the removal of 186.73 hectares of native vegetation. Of the area to be cleared for the project's internal roads, 40-45% is threatened ecological communities (Map **F9-1**). The area immediately surrounding the project location already has 18,160 hectares of native vegetation removed due to State Forest timber production — 13,000 hectares in Nundle State Forest, 4,800 ha at Hanging Rock and 360 ha at Ben Halls Gap, resulting in ridgelines of a radiata pine monoculture, uninhabitable by many native animal species. Adding to their plight, regular logging operations leave

large tracts of land completely bare. Much of the remaining land in the area is cleared and semi-cleared agricultural farmland.

Consequently, *all* remaining native bushland needs to be protected as being extremely valuable habitat for every section of threatened ecological flora communities detailed in the EIS. The only existing protected nature reserve, Ben Halls Gap, at 2,500 ha, is now under threat to be impacted by at least 15 wind turbines.

Regarding the biodiversity study, specifically the noted bird species in the proposed site 9.3.5 Bird Utilisation / 9.4.2.3 Collision Risk (Birds) there has been at least three major raptor omissions, and a serious underestimation of the number of Wedge-tailed Eagle *Aquila Audax*. I am a keen birdwatcher and have observed the Little Eagle *Hieraaetus morphnoides*, Brown Falcon *Falco berigora*, and Swamp Harrier *Circus approximans*, flying over the ridgelines at our farm every year at Ogunbil, approximately 35 km from the site. The Little Eagle searches for prey by soaring up to 500m altitude. Considering their flight path is known to stretch 3,300 km it is reasonable to assume it would frequent the proposed site. The Brown Falcon is known as a wind turbine collision victim flying up to 2000m elevation. The Swamp Harrier also hunts by soaring and gliding often at great heights up to 1700m.

I have also observed 7 wedge-tailed eagles feeding on the one carcass at the same time. Are there any other major omissions in the EIS?



Little Eagle observed at Ogunbil NSW 2340, photo Leslye Cole

13.1.3 HAZARDS AND RISKS / Aviation Safety / Assessment of Impacts / Aerial application of fertilisers, pesticides and aerial baiting of the EIS states:

‘Safe aerial application operations would be possible on properties within the Project Area and neighbouring the Project Area, subject to final turbine locations...by...the use of helicopters (which) enables aerial application

operations to be conducted in closer proximity to obstacles than would be possible with fixed wing aircraft due to their greater manoeuvrability.'

I have observed two fixed wing crop-dusters working in tandem in the most amazing aerial acrobatic display on the one property on the Crawney Road, 8 km away from the proposed site, fulfilling their fertiliser application contract. What risks would there be to these contractor's employment and/or safety with the placement of 70 turbines surrounding the area?

Is it acceptable that a company arranging for French and Japanese companies to buy into productive Australian agricultural land now dictates to the surrounding farmers how they can manage their property when, as savvy business people in their own right, they employ the best contractor for the job at hand?

A lot has changed since this project was proposed in 2017. There has been a huge shift in Australia's regional economy with diversification of income and employment. Rural areas are no longer dependent on the agricultural sector, especially since COVID-19, with the pandemic changing the way we live and work. The year 2020 prompted a rethink of priority for many as working from home became the new norm. This motivated large numbers of tree and sea-changers to search for rewarding and healthy lifestyles in rural and regional areas, taking advantage of lower rent and house prices. University research has recorded 'a new love of nature' for people since the start of lockdown, with city dwellers yearning to spend more time in, and have connection with nature. This year has seen an influx of people into regional areas bringing their income with them.

The recent drought has also kick-started an enterprising business initiative in #buyfromthebush which has diversified income in the rural economy. Social media has offered country businesses a direct line to their city kin. The rich pool of talent and ingenuity in the country is broadcast with a never ending array of creative products being showcased, purchased by customers who enjoy knowing exactly where their money is going and what impact it is having. Farmers have also taken advantage of the increased desire for beautiful landscapes and open spaces, diversifying their income with farmstays and the exploding market of hosting Airbnb's.

This proposal will destroy the vibrant town of Nundle, a town run by enterprising, entrepreneurial and caring business people who have individually and collectively attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors, and consequently, revenue to the town, and to the Tamworth region. Although a small community, they are passionate members who punch well above their weight, winning heritage awards for preserving the built history of the town, and Community Leadership awards. They host a full calendar of events, including the annual Nundle Go For Gold festival which alone generates about \$400,000, attracting up to 16,000 visitors over 2 days, Hats Off To Country, The Great Nundle Dog

Race, The Nundle Country Picnic to name a few. The Nundle Woollen Mill has won multiple tourism awards, educating about the original mill and the region's rich wool producing history. The Dag Station plays an integral part in the Tamworth Country Music Festival, the owner being a fine musician in his own right, hosting songwriting clinics for up-and-coming artists, and concerts throughout the festival. The annual event regularly brings 40,000+ visitors to the region, contributing more than \$50 million to the local economy.

Tourists come to the area for the country music, horse events, fossicking, heritage, the slow pace and beauty of Nundle and the surrounding landscape. It offers a step back in time which appeals to history buffs and those with 'slow living' values, looking for an authentic country experience. The recent COVID-19 lockdown popularised this slow living concept, epitomised by the craze of making sourdough bread.

My husband and I were tourists from Sydney, specifically attracted to Nundle for the fossicking and camping along the picturesque Sheba Dams at Hanging Rock, and The Peel River, visiting numerous times. This town was the catalyst in our decision to sell up in Sydney and make a tree-change. Once established here, my husband was employed in the role of Leading Hand Carpenter at the highly significant Goonoo Goonoo Station conversion to a function and accomodation venue where he worked for 5 years teaching his skills on restoration work, from his over-35 years experience, to the local carpenters employed on the job. My contribution is cultural, as an award winning artist with a body of work documenting the important stories of the people who live and work on the land and their animals, set in the expansive beauty of the Australian landscape. I have exhibited in numerous art shows and exhibitions in the region, including two exhibitions at Weswal Gallery, Tamworth.

Put simply, if Nundle was surrounded by 70 wind turbines, we would never have discovered this area, and would never have moved here, we would have gone past and kept on driving for our scenic country escape. How many others are like us? Could thousands of visitors disappear from the area, along with their revenue? There is a real risk of Nundle becoming a ghost town, resulting in the passionate business owners packing up to move elsewhere.

Many farmers around the area have retired to the town of Nundle, bringing their money with them. My husband and I had planned to do the same — but that will be off the table if the wind farm goes ahead.

Tamworth Council has to seriously consider how important this town is to the region.

What does the NSW Government, Tamworth Regional Council, Upper Hunter Shire Council, and Liverpool Plains Shire Council stand to gain with a proposal which goes against so many stipulations on their Local Environment Plans?

The rampant acceleration of renewable energy projects in the *NSW New England region* is **the number one issue** that keeps me awake at night. Government policies on this issue will be my deciding factor in the next Federal and State Elections.

The whole issue of Energy and its infrastructure has highlighted much more than simply being able to turn the lights on at night. It has exposed the attitudes of our government towards its own people and country, the ignorance of those with the loudest voices—journalists (and the media machine as a whole), activists, politicians, students (and how appalling our education system is that taught them), who are likely trying to do their best, but don't understand the science of the way our planet works. It has also exposed a type of inferiority complex underlying our government and the whole of our community—that Australia is not good enough, we are not worthy, our people, land and seas are not worthy enough to appreciate and protect.

Foreign renewable energy and infrastructure companies capitalise on this weakness and ignorance to push their enterprise because it means *unimaginable rivers* of Australian money flowing to them during construction, operation, and when the sun isn't shining and the wind isn't blowing, they still need their "mafia" *protection* money! forever. When not enough energy is produced by renewables, massive diesel generators pick up the slack, meaning we pay twice for our electricity which is only *clean energy* for some of the time.

While watching one of the many food & travel shows about Italy recently, my screen was filled with the most astonishingly beautiful scenery the particular chef was visiting. It suddenly occurred to me, Italy is a country so deeply committed to protecting its agriculture, material and cultural heritage, where there is a fundamental protection linked to their Constitution *which protects their landscape*. Why doesn't Australia have these kinds of protections? Instead, our government is hell-bent on sabotaging its food & fibre production while deliberately destroying and vandalising its precious landscape with hundreds of industrial energy plants, huge transmission lines and associated infrastructure, while clearing hundreds of square kilometres of native bushland and covering up productive agricultural land. As quickly as it can! In 2023, 68 million tourists visited Italy to experience its picturesque scenery, agriculture, food and wine, authentic rural life, and everything their communities have to offer. Italians know how wonderful their country is—all those things tourists want, are what Italians prize and fiercely protect!

Why do ministers in the Australian government have no such regard for our country? Give no value or protections for our picturesque landscape, valuable agriculture, food and wine, authentic rural life, and everything our communities have to offer? Why do you not prize and fiercely protect our unique lands and way of life?

The cause of this proposed waste and vandalism? The massive push towards net zero emissions, an unattainable pie in the sky.

Balancing out the number of bureaucrats and scientists who have followed the funding to decide CO2 results in global warming, are an equal amount of scientists saying this is absolutely *not* true. Only one side of the argument gets airtime and backing from the those in power. Is this because the facts that say CO2 does not cause global warming will threaten the flow of that unimaginable amount of money to all those dipping their bucket in the renewable energy river?

It seems we live in a time like that of Copernicus, who challenged the common belief that the sun revolved around the Earth. This brilliant scientist was condemned, censored and vilified as an heretic, with his papers and book banned. Unimaginably, brilliant scientists of our time are being treated in exactly the same way for challenging the ideology of the IPPC.

Emeritus Professor William Happer is a regular keynote speaker addressing climate science integrity. As a Princeton professor and climate scientist, Happer explains that contrary to what climate catastrophists and our government is pushing, CO2 is actually good for the world! If you look at geological science we are in a CO2 “famine” as compared to what is normal for plants. Most commercial greenhouses double or triple their level of CO2, at great expense, because it is worth the investment as plants grow so much better—the quality of flowers and fruit are superior. Higher levels of carbon dioxide in the environment builds resistance to drought and recent CO2 increases have shown up in satellite photos as a *greening* of the planet. A perfect example of this phenomena being Western Australia. He argues that it is unbelievable that climate catastrophists have turned this beneficial gas—an essential part of life—into a threat.

National weather agencies around the world homogenise temperature data, actual recorded temperatures in regional areas are merged with urban weather stations, impacted by the *urban heat island effect* caused by high density hard surfaces and bare ground—a phenomena which changes the local weather by increasing temperatures up to an average 7°C. Scientists like Dr Jennifer Marohassy, who study the *raw* observational data note, actual temperature data has been changed, sometimes omitted, and that indeed, there is no runaway global warming. Independent scientists in the USA have drawn the same conclusion that temperature homogenisation *itself* is suspect and producing way too much warming. Modelling that projects 10, 20, 30 years down the track is the same modelling that cannot get the prediction right in one season.

The elephant in the room of this whole climate debate is the immense influence that the giant thermonuclear reactor we know as the Sun has on Earth (and all the planets). Professor Valentina Zharkova is the eminent scientist researching periodicities in solar activity, solar radiation and their links with Earth’s terrestrial

environment. She has written many papers which demonstrate how CO2 is not the cause of any warming, an increase in CO2 in the atmosphere *appears years after* a higher temperature caused by temperature and climate conditions on Earth influenced solely by Sun. Any activity by humans is negligible.

Astrophysicists have long known that The Sun is entering a Grand Solar Minimum (GSM)—a long “hibernation” period where there is minimum solar activity and the brightness of the Sun is slightly decreased. The last GSM was the Maunder minimum, which lasted from 1645-1710 when temperatures across much of the Northern Hemisphere of the Earth plunged, which led to frozen rivers, cold long winters and cold summers. The surface temperature of the Earth was reduced all over the globe, especially, in the countries of Northern hemisphere. Europe and North America went into a deep freeze: alpine glaciers extended over valley farmland; sea ice crept south from the Arctic; Danube and Thames rivers froze regularly during these years as well as the famous canals in the Netherlands. This period also marked a period of increased volcanic activity on Earth.

The modern grand solar minimum started in 2020 and will last around 33 years bringing the same deep freeze and hardship of the Maunder minimum. Prof. Zharkova warns, “very soon ‘global warming’ will be the last thing on our minds” as major challenges will be arriving all at once. From the second half of this decade until the early 2050s, Earth will experience exceptional cold, extreme weather, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions. Zharkova points to 2030 as the year when it will seriously begin, noting that the 2030s will be so cold that it will result in a severe food shortage. Dependable, reliable energy will be of utmost importance as humanity struggles just to keep warm.

Are we already seeing evidence of this phenomena beginning in January 2024? The northern hemisphere is battling through their coldest winter as record upon record are being broken for cold, snow, and ice. Scandinavia set their coldest temperatures of the century; rare snow clipped Cerro de Pasco in Peru; unprecedented string of -40C in Antarctica, Europe breaks historical cold records, North America goes into deep freeze; all-time record breaking snow in Japan; Arctic sea ice is the highest in 21 years; record snow in Alaska; Russia endures -55.9C and debilitating blizzards; lava reaches Grindavík, Iceland, with experts confirming “Icelandic Fault Line has awakened after 800 years”.

If the environment doesn't actually require saving from global warming, why is there even a need to fast track the transition toward wind and solar? is this agenda being pushed by the entities profiting extortionate amounts of money from this ideology? One answer became crystal clear on 17 January 2024 in a speech made by the Chinese ambassador to Australia, Xiao Qian:

“(In 2023) Australia and China properly handled/addressed each others trade concerns on the basis of mutual respect...the two countries have reached a principled consensus on properly resolving trade disputes over

Australian wine exported to China; and the Chinese wind towers to Australia... What we need to do now is to fully implement the important consensus reached by the leaders of our two countries, especially those consensus reached during Prime minister Albanese's visit to China.”

The Master Manipulator has swindled the Gullible Fool. Prime Minister Albanese has signed a deal with China where they agree to remove tariffs on our superior wine exports *in exchange* for Australia buying as many Chinese wind turbines as they can produce. And now its time to pay up. This must go down as the worst international trade deal ever made! It explains why there is such an illogical, lightning speed fight to get more turbines anywhere, *anyhow*. Is the world's #1 largest emitter of carbon dioxide now *dictating* to Australia, (a contributor of only 1.16% of global emissions), what energy policy *we* should have? Clearly, the renewable energy industry is NOT about saving the planet.

Contrary to the government's claim that renewables are cheap, evidence is showing us otherwise. Energy prices are soaring, Australian citizens are being plunged into poverty, businesses are unable to pay energy bills and be competitive. Professor Ian Plimer states that there has never been any proof to show that human emissions drive global warming, our country cannot afford the renewable energy transition and to attempt it we will slide into being an impoverished nation. We are already well on the way, with more than 386,000 businesses exiting the market in the 2022-2023 financial year due to rising costs.

At a time when the Australian government are treating its agricultural lands, rural people and the sector as a whole with utter contempt, in the not too distant future, the northern hemisphere continents might be the ones to value our ability to grow food. We could just be one of the few (warmer) countries still able to do so. Our food producing areas *must be* protected at all costs. Now. It may be a fatal mistake to humanity to cover large areas of Australian agricultural lands with solar panels or destroy hundreds of acres of trees and vegetation to make way for industrial wind turbines, solar farms and associated transmission lines in the nonsensical attempt to reduce CO2.

The present Labor government have already gambled with billions of dollars of our tax payer's money on the "climate change" race. But what if they have backed the wrong horse?

We must HALT any more so-called renewable energy plants which are dependent on foreigners, and consolidate our ability to create power for ourselves. We have the rich energy resources in our own country which supply cheap electricity. Reinstate and rejuvenate the coal powered plants in transition to nuclear power. There seems to be a community swing to being open to nuclear power, which can hook into the *existing* poles and wires infrastructure, and as many advanced countries have found—this must be the way of our energy future. If the predicted consequences of the GSM comes to pass, no

renewable power will cope with the amount of energy needed to keep our citizens warm.

The Labor federal and state governments will go down in history as the people who desecrated one of the most ancient and pristine countries in the world while impoverishing its people.

Contrary to the unbalanced portrayal of community support for the project in the EIS, the majority of the Nundle and Hanging Rock communities have signed petitions opposing the proposed Hills of Gold Wind Farm and do not want to destroy the environment to save the environment.

For these reasons I **oppose** the Hills of Gold Wind Farm.

Sincerely yours,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the author.