

From: [REDACTED]
To: [IPCN Submissions Mailbox](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: SSD-9679 Hills of Gold Wind Farm
Date: Monday, 12 February 2024 5:41:46 PM
Attachments: [Hills of Gold WF Benefit Fund and Community Engagement practice.pdf](#)

Good afternoon,

Please find attached a submission in response to the Commission's call for public comments on this project.

We were not able to upload the submission via the website, so have chosen to send in direct this afternoon. Please confirm by email receipt that you have received it. We are happy for this submission to be made public.

Kind regards,

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Bridget Ryan Policy & Industry Engagement Director [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



I live and work on Wurundjeri land. I pay my deep respects to the Elders of this land, past and present, and to all Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia. I acknowledge sovereignty was never ceded. I commit to working alongside First Nations peoples to achieve a just energy transformation.



12 February 2024

To: NSW Independent Planning Commission

Dear Commissioners,

RE: Benefit Sharing Funds from Hills of Gold Wind Farm

RE-Alliance is working to secure an energy transformation that delivers long-term benefits and prosperity for rural and regional Australia. We do this by listening to the needs of communities most impacted by the transition, facilitating collaboration across the renewables industry to deliver social outcomes and advocating for meaningful benefits for regions at a policy level.

RE-Alliance operates across Australia's eastern seaboard – from Queensland to NSW, Victoria and Tasmania. We play a unique role, as allies of and advocates for renewable energy host communities and assist renewable energy developers seeking to deliver best practice around community engagement and benefit sharing. We are recognised as a leading voice on community engagement and social licence in Australia.

Our most recent edition of the [Building Stronger Communities](#) report documents the adoption and practice of renewable energy projects contributing to the local area through community benefit funds. The report helps to set a benchmark of good practice for industry and share examples with host communities. As we note in the report “done well and combined with excellent community engagement, community benefit funds establish the renewable energy development as a contributor to the community, supporting local needs and aspirations.”

We are making this submission to provide comments on the Hills of Gold Wind Farm community benefit sharing arrangements - proposed with Tamworth Regional Council and the Upper Hunter Shire Council. We have engaged with the developers over time and seen their efforts to engage communities and councils around the project as it moved through the planning process.



Engagement efforts have included community information and drop in sessions, website, project newsletter and regular local media activities. They have also had an information hub in Nundle with local staff and a scale model of the wind farm in place and accessible since August 2022.

Engie's \$11m (based on 62 turbines) benefit sharing structure, tailored to the needs and expectations of both Local Government authorities, is fair and consistent with good practice for wind farms in Australia, increasing committed funds to 1.5% of Capital Improved Value, as is now being routinely requested by NSW Councils. We note that community volunteers are included in the s355 Committees for both Council funds and that "local community interests" will be a guiding principle for the larger of the two funds, with Tamworth Regional Council. The company's pre-construction outlay of sponsorship funds to local groups and the potential for a dedicated (discounted) energy offer to be made through its retail arm - once the project is operational - are good initiatives.

We note also that the proponent is working with local First Nations groups to establish an annual benefit sharing arrangement. To our knowledge, this has not been common industry practice to date and is to be applauded.

For these reasons, RE-Alliance considers that the project owner's efforts show their commitment to sharing the benefits of the project and that they are responding to the needs of the community and local government authorities.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Bray

National Director – RE-Alliance