

My name is Gwenda Hague and I own a property that I live in and a shop that I run a business in, in the main street of Nundle. I am a long-term resident and also a member of Hills of Gold Preservation Inc.

It is with a sense of disbelief that I am again compelled to write a submission to object to this completely non-compliant, destructive (both in the sense of the physical environment and the social cohesion of a community) project that has proven, even to the proponent to be economically unviable without the reinstatement of 15 turbines previously removed by the DPHI.

The DPHI removed these turbines from the project for good reason, they are non-compliant and nothing has been submitted to change that fact. That the whole project can become financially unviable for the proponent based on their reinstatement gives overwhelming credence to the fact that this whole project has been a tenuous, mistake-filled, drawn-out, badly designed and completely wrong siting for a wind farm.

Nothing has changed in any respect to make this project viable. All I can see that has happened is that ENGIE has managed to use the idea of legal repercussions to bring about the DPHI's reinstatement of these previously non-compliant (and still non-compliant) turbines. The only way the Department is able to achieve the outcome ENGIE requires is to allow a private multinational company to "voluntarily" acquire land from a non-associated neighbour using the highly generalised term "in the public benefit". For the Department to allow Voluntary Acquisition by a public company is a serious mis-step that will have significant repercussions to neighbours of SS Projects in the future.

As well as ENGIE requiring that they acquire the neighbouring property, other non-associated dwellings are being forced to accept mitigation measures that don't take into account bushfire risk or the fact that such screenings would take years to become even mildly successful. "Public benefit" is not served in this case, in fact, I would say that it is ENGIE'S interests that are paramount in making this decision.

The "public benefit" argument is not served at all when profit is placed above conservation. For the DPHI to not only reinstate the above turbines but to also approve the 8 turbines and other significant infrastructure that remain on the border of Ben Halls Gap Nature Reserve is a dangerous decision for our environment. Our very precious environment that includes the Critically Endangered Ben Halls Gap Sphagnum Moss Cool Temperate Rainforest. The

decision to approve these turbines puts into jeopardy the lives of the unique, wildlife and habitat (refer to Hills of Gold Preservation Inc previous submission to the Commission for a full list of these endangered inhabitants). It is certainly in “the public benefit” – the present and future generations of “the public” - to continue to strictly preserve and conserve this amazing and important asset. It makes no sense to destroy an environment to protect the environment. These biodiverse world assets once lost can never be recreated and offsets are a sad joke.

One is led to wonder whose real benefits are at the heart of this whole project. When there are huge profits to be made by public companies there has to be strong scepticism as to how much of the “public benefit” is really at stake.

ENGIE has demonstrated throughout the whole the gruelling process a “dragging of the heels” attitude as indicated in the Department’s scathing closing comments. There has been a reluctance, or resistance, to adhere to timelines. They have lacked the level of competency in general to produce the required research to even prove they can transport the components safely and legally to the site. They have proven to be deceitful, lackadaisical and ignorant in the way they communicate with the local community (most affected by the project). They have not shown respect for the cultural heritage including First Nations heritage. They have yet to overcome obstacles confronting them due to the site complexity ie steep terrain, narrow ridgeline, erosion, sedimentation and mass movement risk. They have not been able to convince Tamworth Council that the “public benefit” outweighs the dis-benefits to the LGA.

ENGIE in emphasising and concentrating on the 15 turbines to be reinstated to make the project viable conveniently ignores all the other very serious and major impediments (that have been very comprehensively detailed in the Hills of Gold Preservation Inc’s last submission to the Commission).

The project is not viable at all – not because it is financially unviable without the 15 reinstated turbines but because ENGIE has a badly designed and non-compliant wind farm to be partially built on unlawfully cleared land, a track record of incompetence and because they cannot get the components up there (they have to build a private road illegally through a flood plain and there is as yet no entry point to get the site etc. etc) .

The Commission must not allow the reinstatement of the 15 turbines and find that the 8 turbines still approved bordering Ben Hall’s Gap Nature Reserve

threaten the sanctity of such an area and remove them as well. It must also consider the general non-compliance of the whole project and seriously consider the fact that the "general benefit" is best gained by the preservation of our greatest assets (our unique biodiverse environment) and heritage value.