

My name is Natasha Soonchild and I am making a submission on behalf of my small business Stormcrow Studio. I am a member of the Nundle Business Tourism and Marketing Group and have been a member of the NBTMG executive for several years.

The new Information from the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure published on the Independent Planning Commission website has caused me significant concern and I can only reiterate my objection to this project (as a whole) and the recommended reinstated turbines.

The Independent Expert Advisory Panel for Energy Transition (IEAPET) modelling suggests that a 62 turbine layout of the project is the only viable scenario. So, it seems to me, this project is SO marginal, turbines previously recommended for removal for compliance with the 2016 noise and visual guidelines, and biodiversity conservation measures have been reinstated! Why are we rewarding a private company for poor site selection, poor design and poor consultation? There have been no material changes to the project, they are still going to have the exact same impacts the DPHI deemed non-compliant only months ago. The application of both the 2016 Wind Energy Guidelines and 2023 Draft Guidelines is confusing and seems to favour the Applicant first and foremost. In my opinion, they have needed to cherry-pick guidelines to get these turbines over the line. But where is good planning governance?

The DPHI use a Public Benefit argument to justify their complete backflip on their previous recommendation...but what about the surrounding NADs? What about the community and businesses in the village? What about the environment? They are giving greater weighting to Public Benefit than Individual, community and environmental Disbenefit. It is not in the Public Benefit to approve a project that is marginal to unviable, located between two national Parks (Ben Halls Gap Nature Reserve and Crawney Pass National Park), imposes a Voluntary Land Acquisition on a non-associated dwelling, is partly situated on unlawfully cleared land, and without essential detailed designs of internal roads on steep gradient land, with high erosion, sedimentation, and mass movement risk.

The DPHI is setting a precedent by forcing a badly designed, badly consulted project through the pipeline. In my opinion, their approach does not respect or protect the biodiverse asserts of this region, does not respect or adhere to their very own guidelines, does not respect dwelling entitlements and approved development applications and does not respect non-associated dwellings who have consistently opposed this project and have refused to accept the impacts.

The very nature of our community, environment and landscape has been dismissed, it seems, in favour of the interests of a multinational company. This is unacceptable. The Public Benefit argument the DPHI uses could never outweigh the negative impacts of this proposal. I ask the IPC to reject the Hills of Gold Wind Farm.