

Simone Timbs

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Walcha NSW 2354

15 July 2024

Dear Commissioner Sykes and Commissioners,

Objection to the Hills of Gold Farm SSD 9679

This submission is made after reading the new information relating to the change in recommendation by the NSW DPIE on the Hills of Gold Wind Farm Project.

After reading a number of documents I am very concerned about the change in recommendations by the Planning Department to reinstate 15 of the 17 turbines recommended for removal from the project.

The Planning Department has done a backflip on its own recommendation and is using public interest as its justification to do so.

What is the point of having 2016 and 2022 and Draft 2023 Guidelines if the Department is going to pick and choose how they apply them, with the firm intention of disregarding all guidelines to make a decision that public interest outweighs individual impacts as seen in the Hills of Gold Project.

This would mean that all projects can be potentially approved regardless of scoping reports, SEARS and EIS reports being prepared, as the generation of renewable energy is far more important than any environmental, social or economic impacts.

Outlined in the IEAPET Advice it is acknowledged the Developer has identified each of the number of turbines and their generating power, as compared to those of the Independent Assessment panel. Clearly, Engie knew that their project was only marginally viable with the 62 turbines and still had not appropriately addressed the issues as outlined in the SEARS in relation to site selection and visual amenity.

It is not therefore the responsibility of the Department to then change its recommendations in terms of its guidelines and procedures to accommodate a Developer and facilitate the approval of a non compliant project to ensure its economic viability.

That Engie has failed to negotiate neighbour agreements and have made no attempt in the past 5 years to identify alternative layouts to reduce the impact to non associated neighbours and then have the Department consider the concept of voluntary acquisition as a mitigation measure is totally unacceptable.

What the Department is proposing in going against its own recommendation in the Hills of Gold Project creates a dangerous precedent for Developers and Communities.

The Department must remain transparent and independent. It must not bow to political pressure.

Developers must be held accountable and the only way to do this is to have well designed projects that are economically viable and comply with the guidelines as set by the Planning Department.

Hills of Gold is clearly not one such project. This is clear from the Planning process to date and the comments of Mr Clay Preshaw in his Response to Request for Further Information dated 25 June 2024. It is not the Departments role to progress a project that has significant deficiencies and where the Developer have failed themselves to take the necessary action to resolve such.

Please take the time to consider the submissions presented to you in this project. The ramifications of your recommendations will set precedence for future projects and affected communities.

Kind regards

Simone Timbs