



## **TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

RE: HILLS OF GOLD WIND FARM (SSD-9679)

### **PUBLIC MEETING - DAY 1**

PANEL: CLARE SYKES (CHAIR)  
JULIET GRANT  
DUNCAN MARSHALL AM

OFFICE OF STEVE BARRY  
THE IPC GEOFF KWOK

NAME	MS NICOLE BREWER	MS JUDY COATES
ATTENDEE	MR SCOTT DE KEIZER	MR STEVE BRAKE
	MR MARK RODDA	MR MITCHELL GILLOGLY (ON
	MR DIMITRI VLASOFF	BEHALF OF MR ANDREW
	MR PETER HOOPER	SPICER)
	MS MEGAN TROUSDALE	MS CLARE JAMES
	MR PETER GILL	MS GINA VEREKER
	MS GAIL CYNICK (ON BEHALF	MR DENNIS ARMSTRONG
	OF MS CHERYL SIPPLE)	MR MARK SCHMITT
	MR MATTHEW LANGFIELD	MR RICARD MCLACHLAN
	MR WILLIAM SYLVESTER	MR ANDREW BROWN
	MS RACHEL WEBSTER	MR ROGER SYDENHAM
	MR SHAWN STONE	MR DANIEL SASSI
	MR NICK BRADFORD	MS SUSIE HOOPER
	MR BILL STINSON	MS KERRY NIXON
	MR DAVID BIERMAN	MS ELLA WORLEY
	MR JOHN JRSULJA	MR JOHN MACKAY
	MS SVETLANA VLASOFF	MR GEORGE MACDONALD
	MR ROBERT SCHOFIELD	MR YESTIN HOOPER
	MS DANIELLE DOUGLAS	MR IAN WORLEY
	MR GRAEME WATTS	MS SKYE SYLVESTER
	MS ALENA LAVRUSHKINA	MR JOHN SYLVESTER
	MR BRUCE MOORE	MS SELENA SYLVESTER
	MR VLADMIR VLASOFF	MS ELIZABETH WATTS
	MS MELISSA HADLEY	MS NATASHA SOONCHILD
	MR TIMOTHY VLASOFF	

LOCATION: NUNDLE MEMORIAL HALL

DATE: 10:00 AM – 7.00 PM  
THURSDAY, 1 FEBRUARY 2024

**<THE MEETING COMMENCED AT 10.00 AM**

**MS SYKES:** Well, good morning and welcome to the Independent Planning Commission's public meeting into the state's Significant Development application for the Hills of Gold Wind Farm, SSD 9679. I'm speaking to you today from Kamilaroi land and I acknowledge the traditional owners of the country from which we meet today. I pay my respects to their Elders, past and present, and to the Elders from other communities who may be participating today.

10 My name is Clare Sykes I'm the Chair of this panel. Joining me are my fellow Commissioners Juliet Grant and Duncan Marshall AM. Panel members have made conflict of interest disclosures and the chair of the Commission has determined that the panel can consider this application. A copy of that decision document is available on our website. We have a limited and specific role at the end of the planning process. We decide if an application should go ahead and if so on what conditions. We consider the Department's Assessment Report, the application, your written and oral submissions and other materials that the planning law requires us to consider. All of these materials are either already publicly available or will be available, made available on our website.

20 In making a decision on this case the Commission must obey all relevant laws and consider all applicable policies and the public interest. We are also obliged to consider public submissions and that is the purpose of today. We want to hear what you think about the merits of this application. It is not a forum for submissions on whether you like or approve of the Applicant, the laws we must obey, or the policies we must consider. You all have been sent some guidance from the Commission about expected conduct at this public meeting. If we consider that guidance isn't being followed we can remind you of what's expected and if necessary direct you to end your submission and provide the rest of your submission in writing. If we do that you need to comply promptly so that we can hear from your fellow community members as well.

25 The application has already been assessed by the Department on our behalf. Many of you may have already participated in the Department's processes, and thank you for your participation. There is no need to repeat your previous submissions, they are all available to us for our consideration. The Applicant and the Department have considered your submissions and taken them into account in the application and assessment and recommended conditions that we are considering today. Today we want to hear your response to the Department's assessment, recommendations and the recommended conditions.

40 Even if your submission today objects to the application being approved at all, we encourage you to tell us whether any of your concerns could be addressed, either wholly or in part, by the imposition of conditions. Your consideration of alternatives does not in any way compromise your submission and it enables the panel to consider all options. We will first hear from the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure on the findings of its whole-of-government assessment

of the application currently before the commission. We will hear from the Applicant second, and then we will proceed to hear from our registered speakers. While we will endeavour to stick to our published schedule, this will be dependent on our registered speakers being ready to present at their allocated time. I will  
5 introduce each speaker when it is their turn to present to the panel, and everyone has been advised in advance of how long they have to speak. A bell will sound when a speaker has one minute remaining and a second bell will sound when a speaker's time has expired. To ensure everybody receives their fair share of time I will enforce time-keeping rules. Extensions may be granted on a case-by-case  
10 basis by the panel chair, however in the interest of fairness to other registered speakers an extension may also not be granted.

If you have a copy of your speaking notes or any additional material to support your presentation it would be appreciated if you could provide a copy to the  
15 Commission. Please note that any information given to the Commission may be made public. The Commission's privacy statement governs its approach into managing your information and this is available on the Commission's website.

Exits from this venue in the case of emergency are located along the right-hand side of the hall and toilets are also located outside the venue in the carpark. So it is  
20 now time to call our first speaker. If I could call up Nicole Brewer from the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure.

**MS BREWER:** Thank you, Chair. Good morning, my name is Nicole Brewer,  
25 Director for Energy Assessments at the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure which is formally the Department of Planning and Environment. I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we are joining today's meeting and pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. And I extend that respect to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders  
30 who may be present here today.

The Hills of Gold Wind Farm is a State-significant development project and has been assessed under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act which is the  
35 planning legislation under which all developments in New South Wales are assessed. The Department has undertaken a comprehensive whole-of-government assessment of the application, and by that I mean we have included and consulted with key agencies and the three relevant councils in preparing our assessment.

I would first like to make some general comments on the assessment of this  
40 project. I think it's fair to say that assessing this project has been complex and challenging. The Department raised significant concerns about key issues for the project, including transport, biodiversity and transport impact - and visual impacts. The Department considers these concerns have been addressed in a number of ways through changes the Applicant has made, additional information provided,  
45 proposed changes by the Department or recommended conditions. I do want to note that through the process that's shown on the flow chart there have been a number of formal and informal opportunities for all stakeholders to provide input

and we are now at the determination stage where the final decision will be made by the Commission on the merits of the application.

5 The Applicant, ENGIE, proposes to develop a 384 megawatt wind farm with 64 turbines. The Department, however, has recommended approval of 47 turbines which would have a capacity of 282 megawatts. Before I get into the assessment issues, it is important to provide some strategic context about wind farm development in New South Wales and the project's location. The energy policy context in Australia and New South Wales has significantly changed in recent 10 years. The Commonwealth has set a pathway to net zero emissions by 2050 and affirmed Australia's commitment to meeting its revised 2030 target. The Australian energy market Operator's 2022 Integrated System Plan states that without coal a nine-fold increase in large scale renewable energy generation is needed. This has been further reenforced in the recent 2024 Draft Integrated 15 System Plan. The New South Wales Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill 2023 commits New South Wales to cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and reaching net zero by 2050. There are NSW Government policies and legislation also identifying renewable energy zones, or REZs, across New South Wales which are aimed at encouraging investment in electricity infrastructure and unlocking 20 additional generation capacity in it order to ensure secure and reliable energy in New South Wales. Although this project is not located within a REZ, by being in a region close to these REZs, the infrastructure in the region such as road upgrades to support the development of renewable energy generation such as wind farms would be coordinated by the NSW Government through EnergyCo.

25 Given that all coal-fired power plants in New South Wales are scheduled for closure in the next 20 years, the project would assist in providing large scale renewable energy generation to meet increased electricity demand. The Department considers that the project is consistent with the relevant national, state 30 and local policy documents which identify the need to diversify the energy generation mix and reduce carbon emissions, intensity of the grid, while providing energy security and reliability.

35 The site itself is located approximately 8 kilometres south-east of Nundle in the New England region of New South Wales, 15 kilometres south-west of the New England REZ. The site has access to the electricity network via a new 330 kilovolt transmission line to connect to Transgrid's existing network at Wallabadah. The site is also suitable for a wind farm as it has a high wind resource and is located on an elevated ridge line that has an orientation with good exposure to the prevailing 40 wind. Overall, the Department considers the site to be appropriate for the project and is consistent with the Department's wind energy framework.

45 The project would also provide flow-on benefits to the community, including up to 211 construction jobs and contributions to local councils.

The Department exhibited the EIS through December 2020 until the end of January 2021, and received 592 public submissions consisting of 387 objections,

202 in support, and three comments. The Department also exhibited the second amendment report in November and December 2022, receiving 425 public submissions consisting of 280 objections, 144 support, and one comment.

5 In regard to the location of the submissions, 58 per cent of the submissions from people within the project site objected to the project, and 42 per cent provided submissions in support to the project. And just to note, that we acknowledge there's an inconsistency in the Department's assessment report which provided the data the other way around, but I note that table 5 in the assessment report provides  
10 a more detailed breakdown of submissions and correctly reflects the breakdown.

Advice was received from 19 government agencies, along with the City of Newcastle, Muswellbrook, Upper Hunter and Tamworth councils, and Tamworth and Muswellbrook councils objected to the project. The Department visited the  
15 site five times between 2018 and 2023, including with the visual expert in 2021, and met with landholders near the site.

The most common matters raised in public objections included biodiversity, amenity impacts including visual and noise, socioeconomic factors, site suitability  
20 due to concerns on the high roadability and landslip potential of the site and water quality impacts, and transport. Submissions in support raised the benefits to the local economy through the creation of local jobs, investment in the area, road upgrades and improvement to road safety conditions and benefits of renewable  
25 energy.

Following the EIS exhibition and consideration of the submissions the Applicant made changes to the project which it presented in two amendment reports. Key changes from the two amendments included (audio dropped) there was relocating the site access point for delivery of turbine (audio dropped) and heavy vehicles  
30 requiring escort to Crawney Road, removal of the Devils Elbow Bypass on Barry Road and removal of the Head of Peel as an access route. Realignment of internal tracks and powerlines, and reducing the native vegetation clearing by approximately 17 hectares. Given the reconfiguration of the site access via Crawney Road presented a significant change to the project, the Department  
35 exhibited the second amendment report.

The table on the slide provides an overview of changes to the project, including the applicant's amendments and the Department's recommended changes. The Department recommends deleting 17 turbines, restricting transport route options,  
40 restricting the Crawney Road site access to option B and removing the Happy Valley Road route option through Nundle.

I'm now going to talk about what we consider to be the four key issues for assessment being energy security, visual amenity, traffic and transport, and biodiversity. Regarding energy security. The project as recommended by the  
45 Department would have a capacity of 282 megawatts, which would generate enough energy to power about 150,000 homes. This is consistent with a number of

national and state policies, including the New South Wales Climate Change Bill of achieving net zero emissions by 2050. The project would play an important role in increasing renewable energy generation and capacity, and contributing to the transition to a cleaner energy system as the coal-fired generators retire.

5

On visual amenity. The Department visited the site and several non-associated residences surrounding the project to assess the visual impacts and engaged independent advice from O'Hanlon Design Landscape Architects to review the applicant's visual assessment, visit non-associated residences and provide independent advice. The Department also assessed the project against the 2016 Wind Energy Guideline that is the current guideline in New South Wales for wind farm assessment and includes a visual assessment bulletin which forms part of that guideline. We have assessed against the performance objectives in that bulletin which considers visual magnitude, multiple turbine effects, landscape scenic integrity, key feature disruption, shadow flicker, blade glint and aviation hazard lighting. It is important to note that the Department raised concerns about the potential visual impacts of the project from before the SEARS were requested and throughout the assessment process, including following the exhibition of the EIS in October 2021 and then again in February 2022 and March 2022 in request for information letters. The Applicant eventually responded to concerns raised by the Department during its assessment of the project to address the issues by recently securing neighbour agreements with eight additional landowners and making minor reductions to the project layout with removal of six of the 70 turbines originally proposed. In the absence of securing agreements with several key non-associated receivers which were flagged with the Applicant from an early stage, we recommend that 15 of the 17 turbines be removed to address visual impacts.

In assessing the public view points the applicant's assessment summarised that whilst the project is likely to be a visible element in the landscape, the scenic integrity of the existing landscape character is likely to remain intact. Overall, views of the project would be limited by distance, intervening topography and existing mature vegetation. In summary, the Department considered that the project as recommended with fewer turbines, while visually apparent from public viewpoints, it would not dominate the visual - the existing visual catchment.

Now moving to the assessment of visual impacts from private receivers. Based on the detailed assessment and consideration of the visual bulletin, and the independent advice, the Department considered the performance objectives of the bulletin would not be met at seven receivers: DAD-1, NAD-5, NAD-67, NAD-33, NAD-69, NAD-72 and NAD-98. As a result, the Department has recommended 17 turbines be deleted. Eleven of these were recommended for deletion for multiple reasons: 10 were due to visual and noise, one for visual and biodiversity, five for only visual impacts, and two for only biodiversity impacts. This figure shows the overall layout of the project and the blue turbines are those that are recommended for approval and orange are those that the Department has recommended for

deletion. While deletions were made for specific impacts on multiple receivers or for biodiversity, they also benefit the overall landscape impact of the project.

5 To give you a snapshot of the visual impacts included in the slides are photo  
montages from three locations. At the first location, DAD-1 at the northern end of  
the project, the figure on the left shows the view to the south and the figure on the  
right shows the view to the north. And that's because the receiver would be  
surrounded by turbines. At this location 18 turbines are within 3.1 kilometres with  
10 10 turbines within 2 kilometres and the closest is 330 metres. So the Department  
recommended deletion of 11 turbines due to their proximity being highly visible  
and they would dominate the landscape for this receiver. And all but one of these  
turbines would have had a noise impact at this receiver that could not be mitigated.  
And one turbine was also within the distance of ice being thrown from the blades.  
15 Deletion of the 11 turbines would also reduce the impact at two other receivers,  
NAD-33 and NAD-5.

In the middle photo is a view from NAD5, also at the northern end of the project,  
and the Department considered that five turbines should be deleted and they are all  
the ones that were recommended for DAD-1. In the last photo, NAD-72 at the  
20 south-western end of the project, the Department considered that three turbines  
should be deleted, and all of these also benefit other nearby receivers where there  
were visual concerns. In particular NAD-98 and also NAD-33.

Regarding aviation hazard lighting. The Civil Aviation Safety Authority, known  
25 as CASA, advised that the project is considered a hazard to aviation safety and  
recommended that the wind farm be obstacle lit with low intensity lighting. The  
Applicant developed a night lighting plan proposing to light 28 of the 64 turbines  
with lower intensity aviation hazard lighting. The Department has recommended  
conditions requiring the Applicant to consult with CASA regarding the installation  
30 of aviation hazard lighting and operate hazard lighting in accordance with the  
CASA requirements and in a manner that minimises any adverse visual impacts.

In conclusion, the Department acknowledges that developing a wind farm with the  
recommended reduction in the layout to 47 turbines would still be visually  
35 apparent. However, this layout would meet the visual performance objectives  
described in the visual assessment bulletin as it would not dominate the existing  
visual catchment. The recommended conditions require the Applicant to offer  
landscaping or vegetation screening to all non-associated residences within 5  
kilometres and implement all reasonable and feasible measures to minimise the  
40 impacts of the visual appearance of the development.

On traffic and transport. There are slightly different transport routes for different  
types of traffic. The transport route during construction would be via the Denman  
Road, Bengala Road, Wybong Road, Kayunga Road, Invermein Street, Stair  
45 Street, New England Highway, Lindsays Gap Road and Nundle Road. And heavy  
vehicles would access the site by either Old Hanging Rock Road, Barry Road and

Morrisons Gap Road, or Herring Street, Innes Street, Jenkins Street, and Crawney Road.

5 Vehicles transporting wind turbine blades would access the site by Crosby Street, Oakenville and a new site access on Crawney Road. This last route for the heavy vehicles requiring escort, also known as over-dimensional vehicles, was added in response to significant concerns raised by Tamworth Regional Council and the project was amended to remove the need for construction of a bypass at the Devils Elbow along Barry Road. This was a significant change to the project and was a  
10 key point of concern.

Regarding construction traffic volumes, light and heavy vehicle movements would peak at up to 78 light vehicles and 63 heavy vehicles during the day over the 24 month construction period. A maximum of six heavy vehicles requiring escort per  
15 day will be required for the delivery of the wind turbine components during construction. To support the transport route for construction, a schedule of road upgrades is included in our recommended conditions requiring the Applicant to undertake these upgrades to the satisfaction of the relevant roads authority, repair and damage - repair any damage attributable to the development, schedule heavy  
20 vehicle movements to avoid peak hour traffic, and prepare a comprehensive traffic management plan.

The Department engaged with EnergyCo regarding proposed road upgrades from the port of Newcastle and Bengala Road in Muswellbrook Shire LGA. Some  
25 works relate to those required for the central west REZ and additional works from Bengala Road in Muswellbrook North would be required to facilitate transport to the New England REZ. The Department considers that the proposed transport route should to the fullest extent possible adhere to the road network upgrades proposed to be facilitated by EnergyCo. As such, the Department recommended a  
30 condition restricting the movement of vehicles to route 1.

The Department's assessment also concluded that restricting transport route options would reduce transport impacts and recommended restricting the Crawney Road site access to option B to reduce impact on Crown land and removing the  
35 Happy Valley Road route through Nundle. With road upgrades, regular road maintenance and the implementation of a traffic management plan, the Department considers that the project would not result in unacceptable impacts on the capacity, efficiency or safety of the road network subject to the implementation of the recommended conditions. And operational traffic is  
40 expected to be minimal.

Now, to biodiversity. In New South Wales the best wind resources are often available at the higher elevations on hills and ridges which is where this project is located. These areas are often associated with the least vegetation clearing and for  
45 that reason most wind farm projects cannot be developed without some clearing. The project was designed to avoid and minimise impacts on threatened species and communities, and turbines have been located outside of migratory pathways to

reduce the risk of collision with birds and bats. Of the 8,700 hectare project site and 447 hectare development footprint, about 191 hectares of native vegetation would be cleared of which approximately 40 hectares is derived native grassland. Approximately 22 hectares of the impacted vegetation comprises threatened ecological communities listed under the BC Act.

The Department's assessment concluded that the removal of two turbines, 24 and 28, would further avoid impacts by reducing clearing of threatened ecological communities in moderate to good condition and provide additional benefit by removing turbines that pose a moderate risk of blade strike to avifauna, further reducing the risk - the potential for impact.

T42 is also recommended for removal due to its very close proximity to the Ben Halls Gap Nature Reserve being located within 130 metres of the canopy of the vegetation in the reserve. On flora and fauna impacts no candidates threatened flora species would be impacted by the project, and in regard to threatened fauna species 14 threatened fauna species listed under the BC Act and six listed under the EPBC Act may be impacted through direct habitat loss from vegetation clearing and indirect impacts. Impacts will be offset via species credit offsets.

In regard to bird and bat strike, the area surrounding the project site is known to have high species diversity and density of microbats, and the Biodiversity Development Assessment Report, or BDAR, included a strike risk assessment for individual turbines. The Applicant removed three of the four turbines identified as having a high collision risk and relocated a fourth to reduce the likelihood of strikes.

The assessment identified a correlation between the bat activity at hub height and wind speed, and that was at lowest wind speeds less than 5 metres per second and the applicants proposed to implement a strategy from when certain turbines would not operate, which is also known as smart curtailment, for those turbines deemed to pose a moderate risk of collision impacts to collision to birds and bats. The Department's recommended conditions requiring the Applicant to carry out detailed monitoring of the bird and bat strike impacts of the project and carry out adaptive management if the impacts are higher than predicted or result in adverse impacts on any threatened bird or bat species in the locality.

The impacts to the native vegetation and species would generate approximately 5,800 ecosystem credits and 9,400 species credits. The Department's recommended conditions requiring the Applicant retire the biodiversity offset credits prior to carrying out any development that would directly or indirectly impact biodiversity offset values requiring offset.

Overall, the Department considers that the biodiversity impacts of the project would not be significant subject to the additional removal of turbines 24, 28 and 42. The implementation of the recommended conditions and by offsetting the residual biodiversity impacts of the project.

Now I will talk about a few other matters the Department considered during its assessment. In regard to constructability of the project the community did raise concerns about the high erosion and landslip potential of the site and the potential impacts on water catchments. And this included the local interest group commissioning reviews of the EIS. The Department engaged independent advice on this issue from Pells Sullivan Meynink to review the constructability of the project and the erosion and sediment control assumptions made by the Applicant. It also included commentary on the peer reviews commissioned by the Hills of Gold Preservation Inc specialist group in terms of its relevancy to the management of soil and water impacts of the development.

The Department and the independent advice considered the Applicant has sufficiently demonstrated in its concept design that appropriate mitigation measures and strategies can be developed and implemented during the detailed design stage, and I also note that it is a strict liability offence to pollute any waters offsite under the POEO Act.

Construction traffic noise levels are predicted to comply with the recommended noise affected criterion under the Environment Protection Authority's guidelines that all non-associated receivers, and road traffic noise is predicted to comply with the guidelines. Regarding operational noise, modelling predicts that five non-associated receivers would not comply with the relevant environmental noise criteria in the noise bulletin and as such the Applicant has committed to operate 10 turbines in a noise-reduced mode at wind speeds above 8 metres per second which is also known as curtailment.

The noise levels are then expected to comply with the adopted criteria, four of the five non-associated receivers with the implementation of the curtailment regime, but cannot be met at one receiver, DAD1, which also relates to the deletion of nine turbines.

The Hills of Gold Preservation Inc special interest group commissioned a peer review of the Applicant's noise impact assessment focusing on the assessment of operational noise impacts. The Department considers that the information provided by the Applicant regarding the candidate wind turbine model and the noise modelling to be appropriate. Both the Department and the Environment Protection Authority consider that the operational noise impacts of the project can comply with the requirements of the Department's noise bulletin, and the project would be subject to strict noise limits under an environmental protection licence.

On historic heritage, Tamworth Regional Council and the community raised concerns about the project's impact of the heritage character of the Nundle village, including vibration impacts caused by construction traffic and proposed impacts on the historic location of the Black Snake Gold Mine on Crown land. The Applicant amended the proposed transport route for heavy vehicles requiring escort to avoid the impacts to the Black Snake Gold Mine and the Crown land.

Tamworth Regional Council expressed concern that the access route would cause ongoing impacts on the heritage curtilage of the Peel Inn. The Applicant's assessment concluded that the temporary access road would not have an impact on the heritage streetscape of Nundle and a minor temporary impact to the aesthetic values of the Peel Inn but a negligible impact overall. The Department notes that the proposed road will be at the rear of the Peel Inn and is not adjacent to its front facade, and the Applicant is committed to remove and rehabilitate the access road through the peel Inn curtilage at the conclusion of construction. This access road would need to be reinstated and rehabilitated as required during operation and decommissioning.

The proposed transport route for heavy vehicles through Nundle passes close through to locally listed heritage items Saint Peters Catholic Church and the Nundle Shire offices, approximately 80 and 20 metres from the roadway respectively. The department considers the impacts to Saint Peters Catholic Church unlikely and as Nundle Shire offices are closer to the roadway the Department's has recommended conditions regarding road noise and vibration limits at the building. The Department also recommends that the Applicant undertake pre and post construction dilapidation surveys of the building to monitor for potential impacts.

In regard to decommissioning and rehabilitation the Applicant estimates that the operational life of the project is about 35 years, but there is potential for it to operate for a longer period of time if turbines are upgraded over time as is permitted under the recommended conditions of consent. The recommended conditions require the Applicant to rehabilitate the site in accordance with a number of objectives, which include that the site must be safe, stable, and non-polluting, above-ground infrastructure, access roads and underground cabling must be removed unless the planning secretary agrees otherwise, and land must be rehabilitated and restored to pre-existing use. With the implementation of these objective-based conditions and monitoring requirements the Department considers the project will be suitably decommissioned at the end of the life of the project and the site would be appropriately rehabilitated.

Regarding decommissioning bonds it's NSW Government policy that financial assurances should not be required by conditions of consent and any financial assurances should be dealt with in commercial arrangements outside the planning system.

Socioeconomic impacts. The project would provide benefit to the community by providing approximately 200 construction jobs, expenditure on accommodation and businesses in the local economy by workers, goods and services. In addition, the Applicant would enter into a voluntary planning agreement or VPA with the council providing contributions of up to \$1.9 million adjusted to CPI to Upper Hunter Shire Council and \$9.5 million to Tamworth Regional Council, prioritising community projects within 20km of the site. While Tamworth Regional Council

accepted the quantum of the VPA offered by the Applicant it did not accept the final terms of the timing of payments and the administration mechanism. The Department has recommended that if the VPA offered by the Applicant is not accepted by Tamworth Regional Council, and therefore unable to be executed, it's reasonable to include a condition that the Applicant make a monetary contribution to Tamworth Regional Council of \$6.3 million.

There would be broader benefits to the State through an injection of \$826 million in capital investment to the New South Wales economy, and the Applicant is committed to sourcing workers from the local community.

In summary. This has been a long, complex and challenging assessment. The Department has undertaken a comprehensive assessment of the merits of the project. Electricity-generating works on the site are permissible with consent. The wind farm development is a suitable land use for the site as it has good wind resources, access to the electricity network which may allow the wind farm to generate renewable energy earlier than other projects that rely on new transmission infrastructure, and it's located adjacent to two REZs where infrastructure in the region would be supported by the New South Wales Government. The project has been designed or amended through the assessment process in response to the Department's concerns, including removing six turbines and removing a haulage road transport option on Devils Elbow in response to concerns from the community, the objection from Tamworth Regional Council and concerns.

Importantly, the project would assist in transitioning the electricity sector from coal and gas fired power stations to low emission sources. The Department considers that the project achieves an appropriate balance between maximising the efficiency of the wind resource development and minimising the potential impacts on surrounding land users and the environment. On balance, the Department considers that the project is in the public interest and is approvable subject to the recommended conditions of consent. Thank you.

**MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, Nicole. Did you have any questions? Nicole, so we just have - before you leave we believe we do have a question for you from Commissioner Grant.

**MS GRANT:** Thanks, Nicole. That was really informative. I just wonder is there any guidance in any of the policy framework about how to weigh up the public versus the private interest in terms of the visual impact? So clearly - we have heard a lot, we've been out to a lot of those sensitive receivers over our travels over the last three days and we heard a lot - and I'm sure we will hear more today - from people about the impacts at a private level versus the public, and I just wonder is there guidance on how that's balanced?

**MS BREWER:** I think - the first thing I would say is that balancing the merits of the project is one of the kind of the key tenets of the Environmental Planning and

Assessment Act and looking at all of those impacts in totality and also the benefits. In terms - I think the key things in terms of visual impacts and that assessment, and the benefits that a project such as this might deliver, has needed to occur for all of the wind farms that have been approved to date in New South  
5 Wales. The 2016 wind energy framework is the policy document that is in place for the assessment of the visual impacts of this project, and we very carefully assess the visual impacts against those performance objectives. So we've considered all of those visual impacts against those objectives in the guideline and we feel that the recommendation that we've made with the deletion of turbines  
10 where they have - where we have considered they don't meet the performance objectives is consistent with the Visual Assessment Bulletin. So I think that kind of weighing of all of the impacts is something that we need to do as assessment - as an assessment team and that that - but it does need to be in accordance with the New South Wales policy and guidelines in place at the time.  
15 And we feel that we've done a very detailed comprehensive assessment against each of those performance objectives, including seeking some, you know, additional independent advice that has informed that, you know, weighing of what we consider the impacts and the benefits of the project.

20 **MS GRANT:** Thank you.

**MS BREWER:** Thanks.

25 **MS SYKES:** Nicole, I just have one question as well. In your final slide you note the broader benefits for the State with the injection of approximately 826 million in capital investment. Could you confirm that that includes the adjustments to the proposal or what - does that include the recommendations for the removal of turbines? Does it also include the adjustments that have been - that have occurred  
30 throughout the development application process, including say the adjustments to the transport roads?

**MS BREWER:** So, I mean that information is informed by information provided by the Applicant and it's information that's generally provided at the beginning of the process.

35 **MS SYKES:** Okay.

**MS BREWER:** So it is for the project as proposed by the Applicant.

40 **MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, Nicole. So we will now move on to our next speaker, Scott De Keizer from ENGIE Australia and New Zealand.

45 **MR DE KEIZER:** Thanks, Chair. Thanks, Nicole. Firstly I would like to introduce myself. I'm Scott De Keizer from ENGIE Australia. I'm head of development and I'm here to represent ENGIE in the project in this public meeting. I appreciate that I'm not a familiar face, but if you look around the hall

you will notice my colleagues who have been here through the journey and will continue to be active in the community as we move forward.

5 So thanks for the opportunity to be here in Nundle to discuss the Hills Gold Wind Farm. We have been here since 2018, having cups of tea, running information sessions, trekking over the site, sponsoring community events and benefitting from Nundle's hospitality. From Jamie Chivers, to Aref Taleb, to Jacqui Niemand, to Tim Mead, we have been present in the community in the pursuit of developing the wind farm and we greatly appreciate this opportunity to be here at this juncture  
10 of the project as we move towards a determination on our development approval.

It's worth noting that this is not the end of our engagement with the community but something that will continue to be - that will continue into the next phase of this project and beyond. Our community hub will remain open and is open today for  
15 anyone who wants to go and visit.

I would like to make an acknowledgment of country. So I would like to acknowledge that we are currently on the land of the Kamilaroi people. ENGIE has a reconciliation action plan as is working with First Nations people across our organisation across our portfolio projects. We pay our respects to Elders past,  
20 present and emerging and I would just like to quickly draw your attention to the artwork. This is done by our First Nations artist Emma Johnson out of Hay. We understand the critical importance of First Nations people to making - to bettering our projects through their storytelling, their talents and their unparalleled  
25 understanding of the land.

Next slide. So now a little bit about ENGIE. ENGIE is the largest power company in the world operating in 31 countries globally. In Australia ENGIE has operated for almost 30 years. ENGIE's first contribution to renewables in Australia was in  
30 2005 with the commissioning of the Canunda wind farm in South Australia, an asset that we still own and operate. And now that's alongside the Willogoleche wind farm which was commissioned in 2019.

ENGIE has more than 4 gigawatts of renewables in development in Australia in  
35 which 2.9 gigawatts is in New South Wales and Hills of Gold is our flagship project. We have a track record of building long term relationships with communities, landowners, First Nations people and government; an approach which will greatly assist the delivery of much-needed renewable energy to contribute towards the nation's energy transition.  
40

I would like to note here that ENGIE's partnership on this project is with Someva who has stood shoulder to shoulder with maintaining continuity for the project and the community. Someva is a family-owned New South Wales wind farm developer. They have supported this project since 2017 progressing approvals,  
45 working with landowners and community, and providing technical and commercial advice for the unified goal of getting this project to construction and beyond.

Now, a quick overview and just to - sorry, next slide. A quick overview and just a reference to 62 which is probably a number that's new right now. So we lodged the amended Environmental Impact Statement, the EIS, for the approval of 64  
5 turbines which 47 were recommended by the Department for approval. We are seeking the reinstatement of 15 of those 17 which would make the Hills of Gold Wind Farm a 62 turbine wind farm. So these 62 turbines would have a tip height of 230 metres and power 163,000 homes. The project has been carefully selected and refined to take advantage of the strong wind resource whilst minimising the  
10 biodiversity and visual impact.

Absolutely key to the siting of this wind farm is the access to the existing 330KV transmission network. This means the project doesn't have to wait for any further investment in the renewable energy zones for it to go ahead and connect. Also  
15 when looking at the project in a regional context this is an area that land use revolves around grazing and forestry which works alongside wind farm development. Additionally the topography of the region naturally screens views leading to lower visual impact for projects such as ours. This is a fantastic area to develop, own and operate wind farms. Next slide.

20 To move onto the commitment to the community. So the project's commitment initially started at 2,500 per turbine per year which at the time represented an industry standard. In '21 this was increased to 3,000 per turbine per year after further engagement with council and community. Then in 2023 the position was  
25 further revised to keep up with best practice and to re-affirm our strong commitment to Nundle and the region. We increased to over 6,000 per turbine, which exceeds the council expectation of 1.5 per cent of the capital investment value. And on the basis of a 62 turbine wind farm this would mean more than 11 million in funding contribution over the life of the project.

30 Additional items include First Nations agreements offered to the Kamilaroi and the Nungaroo, as well as an energy offer for locals, something ENGIE can uniquely offer as an energy retail business. Next slide.

35 So it's been a process to get to here and a significant amount of engagement has happened. This project was introduced to the community in 2018. Our focus was engaging residents closest to the project and communities of Nundle, Hanging Rock and Crawney. We did this by being present in the community, whether that be sitting with community members in the shop front, at the pub, newsletter drop  
40 offs, information sessions, or just one-on-one discussions. We recorded over 400 interactions within 5 kilometres of a turbine and an additional 785 with broader community prior to lodging our amended EIS report in Jan of 2022.

45 Through the public exhibition phase of the EIS we had strong representation from communities within 50 kilometres of the project. That gave us great insight into the key issues. As you will see here traffic, biodiversity, the justification for the

project being here, visual impact and socioeconomic impact which Nicole covered in her presentation.

5 We were able to use this information as well as the information learnt through greater survey work and assessment to make a number of project amendments. Next slide. So based on this feedback for that engagement the project moved from a 97 turbine project in the scope and report that was submitted in 2018 to a 70 turbine project when the original EIS was submitted in 2020. We took advantage of more survey data and better engagement with key stakeholders ensuring greater setbacks, lower biodiversity and visual impacts. Again, through the continuous survey work and increased assessment of the site, of the 70 turbines originally submitted in the EIS we relocated 23 turbines further avoiding threatened ecological species, reducing bird and bat collision risk and improving turbine spacing and setbacks. And we also removed six turbines that we couldn't mark of site to reduce unsatisfactory impact. This led to the submission of an amended EIS in many 2022 with a total of 64 turbines sought for approval. Next.

20 The amended EIS also incorporated a change to the transport routes envisaged for the site. We removed the Devils Elbow Bypass, though in the historical importance of the Black Snake Gold Mine and to address safety concerns for oversized and overmass vehicles moving through that section of road. We also included the Crawney Road transport route option which we refer to as the western access route. There were two options assessed in order to get to the western access route. There was the Nundle loop and the Nundle bypass which is behind the Peel Inn. The Nundle bypass is the only option recommended by the Department and this is the position that the project can accept. It's worth noting that this option avoids blades and tower sections moving through the main intersection of Nundle.

30 The inclusion of the western access route for oversized, overmass vehicles provides the option to split local traffic volume through Nundle and reduce traffic on Barry Road. We believe this to be a really positive amendment outcome. Next slide.

35 Just to close. So firstly it's worth noting that ENGIE supports the majority of the Department's recommendation from their assessment including the removals of turbines 24 and 42. However, we are asking the Commission to consider reinstating 15 turbines. We believe that a 62 turbine project would deliver enhanced community benefits and greater environmental outcomes. This would provide clean, green energy to an additional 47,000 homes, create an additional 150 direct and indirect jobs, and inject more than \$50 million into the local economy.

45 In closing, thank you for the opportunity to stand and provide an overview of our project, and thank you for the engagement with ENGIE at this point. Whether you are a supporter, an objector, or on the fence, you have helped shape the project to what it is today which is a great wind project. It's a great wind project because it's

well cited both in terms of biodiversity and visual impact outcomes. It's a great project because it has a strong investable wind resource. It's a great project because it will deliver considerable positive outcomes for surrounding communities. And it's a great project because of the robust, sometimes challenging but ultimately constructive engagement the community has had with our team and our project. We appreciate there are differing views and that change is difficult. However, what we are asking is that the resistance to change and progress doesn't come at the expense of the immensely positive impact the project will have to Nundle and the region, not just for years but for decades. Thank you.

**MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, Scott. I will just check whether - Commissioner Marshall, whether you have any questions?

**MR MARSHALL:** I just wanted to I guess reflect on the viability of the project if the decision moves in the direction of reducing the number of turbines from the Applicant's proposal of 64. Does that influence your consideration of the viability of the project?

**MR DE KEIZER:** Well, I guess it impacts the benefit we can provide through our project. So a larger project can provide the cost of energy at a lower price. So we haven't gone through the process of killing a project at this stage, but what we are saying is that we believe we can make a better project with the 62 turbines that we are asking to build.

**MS SYKES:** Thank you, Scott. Commissioner Grant?

**MS GRANT:** The Department is recommending some conditions regarding smart curtailment strategy and adaptive management in direct response to submissions and concerns raised.

**MR DE KEIZER:** Yes.

**MS GRANT:** Are those kinds of strategy something that ENGIE is familiar with? Are they commonplace or tried and trusted in the world of wind farm renewable energy marketplace, or are we breaking new ground with these kind of approaches?

**MR DE KEIZER:** Yes. Not necessarily breaking new ground because the actual action is something we do on all wind farms all over the world, and so curtailment is something using old technology, SCADA system. So it's a very - the technology itself is existing in use, it's the basis for why we curtail, which is probably different in this. Sometimes we curtail because of wake effect for a project mostly to make sure we are reducing losses, where in this instance we are going to curtail for the basis of biodiversity impact to make sure we are reducing the impact on bird and bat. So the technology isn't groundbreaking, I guess, it is just applying it for this reason may not have happened a considerable amount.

**MS GRANT:** Thank you.

5 **MR MARSHALL:** Can I just follow that up? I guess what confidence is there that the smart curtailment strategy will achieve the sort of reduced impact on biodiversity that is suggested?

10 **MR DE KEIZER:** Yes, I guess the assessment has gone through that process to understand how that strategy would work. And then obviously through the life the project we don't just build it and walk away, we build it and we continue to monitor. So we will continue to monitor the outcomes of our project across a variety of different conditions, and that would be one of them in our bird and bat management plan as well.

15 **MR MARSHALL:** Sorry, just one more follow-up.

**MR DE KEIZER:** Go for it.

**MR MARSHALL:** Has this worked well, I guess, in terms of biodiversity?

20 **MR DE KEIZER:** To be honest I don't have that on hand as to whether it's worked or not. So if we could take that away.

25 **MS SYKES:** Thank you. And, Scott, it's a clarification question. So in terms of your supporting the majority of DPHIs Assessment report and the recommended conditions, but seeking the reinstatement of 15 turbines, you accept their recommendation for the removal of 42 and 24?

**MR DE KEIZER:** Yes.

30 **MS SYKES:** Are they the turbine numbers?

**MR DE KEIZER:** Correct, yes.

35 **MS SYKES:** Thank you. Thanks very much.

**MR DE KEIZER:** Cool. Thank you.

**MS SYKES:** So we would now like to move on to our next speaker, Mark Rodda.

40 **MR RODDA:** Thank you, Chair. Before I commence I would like to declare a potential conflict, and I mentioned this earlier when we - council met with the panellists of the IPC earlier this week, that I am an employee for Department of Planning Housing and Infrastructure Crown lands. I also advise in the determination of the various iterations of this application. I never participated in  
45 any of the processes related to Crown land matters.

**MS SYKES:** Thank you very much.

**MR RODDA:** Good morning, I'm a long-term resident of the Tamworth community and a councillor serving with the people of the Tamworth Regional Council local government area. This contentious and divisive project will create a  
5 irreparable blight on the environment and vista of Hanging Rock, Nundle and Timor. This is a proposal that a majority of the community have fought against for more than five years and they have been through hell during that time trying to get a positive outcome for their communities. They and I are not against renewable energy projects, far from it. We simply believe this proposal is in the wrong  
10 location.

This project has no social licence. There are serious questions about the capital investment value and the impact on the value of the turbine reduction. There is no  
15 transparency of the value for the New South Wales consumer in terms of government subsidies and impact on electricity prices, and the viability of the project considering much of the same access infrastructure will need to be built for less return due to inappropriate site selection.

My council has committed considerable resources in planning, staff and  
20 councillors' time to understanding and assessing the potential impacts of this project as have many concerned residents who we represent, and many concerns have not been adequately addressed as the proponent hopes to address these should the project be approved.

25 It is significant that this project so far is the only renewable project that my council has objected to, and for good reason. Two national parks, Ben Halls Gap Nature Reserve and Crawney Pass National Park. Extensive recreational - (audio dropped) joy will be irrevocably destroyed by this proposal. I note that the Department is aware of both authorised and unauthorised clearing, this makes the  
30 remaining native vegetation on the range and slopes even more important.

It is largely a bushfire-prone area and the proposing clearing for infrastructure may not include additional clearing that the proponent would require to protect  
35 their infrastructure prior to or during a bushfire event. This will destroy more irreplaceable biodiversity and habitat for endangered species. Biodiversity offsets will never compensate for the loss of significant areas of vegetation. The topography is steep in many areas and road infrastructure to individual turbines will be significant, as will the clearing of vegetation will likely be greater than  
40 stated.

While there are parts set aside for farming and forestry, there are significant areas of untouched vegetation. The vista and visual amenity of the region will be  
45 destroyed for residents and visitors who will see an industrialised vista, not the current untouched parts of the native vegetation which largely comprise a footprint of the wind farm proposal.

I note one of the development consents provided by Planning New South Wales was a condition to prevent, minimise or offset adverse environmental impacts. The proponent has failed to demonstrate that it can comply with that condition. It is bemusing that we think that we can fix climate issues with renewable energy projects that are so environmentally destructive as this project is.

Economically, the Nundle and Hanging Rock communities are the go-to destination for visiting family and friends. Tamworth's largest tourism segment. It plays an important role in encouraging visitors to stay one more night and increase their spend. It does this year-round. Unlike other locations, businesses are open on weekends and public holidays and school holidays. And Nundle hosts a unique program of events from singer-songwriter retreats to The Great Nundle Dog Race, Nundle CWA Art Show, Nundle Country Picnic and more. I mentioned how divisive this project was to the community. We lost the marvellous annual Go for Gold Festival held during Easter that brought around 16,000 people to the village because of divisions in the community over the project.

Socially, Nundle contributes to the livability of Tamworth. With its subalpine climate it is our Leura, Katoomba. We love the indie shops, the pub, doughnuts, cabins, B&Bs, free camps, Chaffey Dam and Sheba Dam for swimming, fishing and kayaking and the snow. It is also a sight and source of rich European and Chinese gold mining heritage.

Council's Blueprint 100 states council's intent to protect the character of Nundle and Hanging Rock. This project will permanently industrialise the entrance to the village and the highly visible surrounding landscape day and night. The experience of the heritage buildings and street trees of Nundle are important to residents and visitors. This project permanently compromises the experience of the heritage village by industrialising a highly part of the range - a highly visible part of the range for 35 years (audio dropped) Assessed important access and biodiversity issues which I spoke about to the IPC recently with council and I have included details in my submission sent to the IPC.

Despite money offered to landholders, 80 per cent of dwellings within the 8.7 kilometres of the project remain non-associated, and that indicates how important the ridge line and environment is to the local community. The community has suffered socially and the Community Enhancement Fund will only create a further wedge in an already divided community.

There is no suitable remediation plans at the project's end of life. The project is not in the public interest because it currently has no access. It is incomplete, high risk, and is unapprovable. And I thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

**MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, Mr Rodda, for making your submission. I just had a question with the notes that you were reading. Will you be planning to also submit those as part of your written submissions?

**MR RODDA:** Yes, Chair.

**MS SYKES:** Thank you. Did you have any questions? No more questions. Thank you very much.

5

**MR RODDA:** Thank you.

**MS SYKES:** So I would like to now call up to speak Dimitri Vlasoff.

10 **MR VLASOFF:** Good morning. My name is Dimitri and I live in Hanging Rock. I object to the proposed Hills of Gold Wind Farm. I live at the end of Shearers Road and this wind farm will cause a major impact of my life and the accessibility of my property. I work remotely from home but travel to Nundle daily to check on my grandmother to make sure she is well and assist her with anything required.  
15 The disruption that this project will cause to myself and my family is extreme.

Shearers Road and Morrisons Gap Road are mountain roads and we often have difficult weather here such as icy conditions, fog, or poor visibility. In bad weather the trip to Nundle can take up to 45 minutes. It will be worse with all the  
20 construction activities on the road and all the traffic coming down the road. I have been told they are proposing to give us handheld radios so we can call them first before they give us permission to leave our homes. How long will it take to get to Nundle then? An hour? Two? We have three main issues here: Traffic coming up Barry Road, and down Morrisons Gap Road; over 100 trucks a day and even more  
25 light vehicles for two years; we have earthworks on the road itself once inside the wind farm site, trenches across the road, new roads between turbines crossing and overlapping the public road, and then we have turbines proposed to be built so close to the road we will have to drive under and between the turbines for the next  
30 30 plus years to get home and back. There has not been sufficient planning of this proposal and how it will affect the residents who live on this road with no other route available.

The placement of the turbines will put us all at risk of getting showered with ice. There has not been enough clearance or setback allowed from the only road to and  
35 from home. I don't know what will happen if they have a major issue or emergency with the turbines. I really think the turbines close to the road need to be removed. They are also an eyesore as we travel to and from our homes.

This proposal has undergone several changes; nothing got resolved. Too many  
40 issues still remain and Tamworth Council keeps objecting for a good reason. They are trying to build a wind farm in a place where it's very hard to build one. This is not a viable, long-term, green project that without outweigh the harm that it would cause. ENGIE's information hub in Nundle has not been able to answer any queries asked by myself or my family. The ENGIE proposal, their website and the  
45 information hub do not provide any clear advice or logical and realistic overview of the project from its commencement to completion.

From the outset of this proposal ENGIE have trespassed on my property and used photographs taken from my land and used them in their promotional material. There has been no direct contact from ENGIE since leaving a flier in my front gate several years ago, yet I have heard from neighbours they are advising others I have given them my support and do not object. I most certainly do object. ENGIE's claims of consultation with local residents are false. They have not been in touch with each person who will be impacted. This assessment process has been frustrating and lengthy, it has caused a divide between the locals. The full scope of the damage the construction will cause is not known. I think they have underestimated the amount of earthworks that will be needed in this terrain.

The process during construction will be much worse and has the potential to lead to erosion and degradation of the existing landscape, flora and fauna. The fact that many amendments were needed to the proposal shows that there has not been enough planning nor a viable plan of how the entirety of the project will be carried out. I don't think they can demonstrate viable access after all these years. Nobody understands how they are going to get all these big heavy loads to the ridge given the steepness. New proposals being made including changing roads within Nundle is a testament to the lack of proper investigation and local consultation carried out by ENGIE. They didn't do much preparation and study the area beforehand.

The construction of a new bypass road within Nundle just to allow trucks access does not make any sense. I hope the council doesn't allow the construction of something that would actually take away from what is natural and has been for many years. If a green project is to ensure sustainability and protection of the environment, the proposal to cut new roads whilst removing flora shows this project is against sustainability. There are currently logging trucks from the state forest which are causing damage to the roads and based on their weight, compared to the weight of the trucks required for the project, the roads will require constant fixing. It means more delays for us. Logging trucks are going down loaded and coming back empty. The wind farm trucks will be going up loaded. Is it even possible? There has not been adequate allowance for the works actually required just to get the materials to their proposed locations, let alone the actual construction phase. They have not specified which quarry they will use. They were proposing to use the quarry within the State forest but then it changed too, and now they are not proposing anything at all as far as raw materials are concerned. Why did the Department make the recommendation without this information in place? If the project was safe, sound, environmentally friendly and well planned there would not be a requirement for the ridiculous amount of amendments made, nor would there be as much local resistance against this wind farm. Thank you.

**MS SYKES:** Mr Vlasoff, just before you step away could I just have one point. Thank you very much for your submission. Could I just have one point of clarification that your residence is on Shearers Road?

**MR VLASOFF:** Yes.

**MS SYKES:** So it's as you come through the Morrison Gap Road to then the left on to Shearers Road?

5 **MR VLASOFF:** Yes.

**MS SYKES:** Yes. Thank you. Thank you very much. I would just now like to call up our next speaker, Peter Hooper.

10 **MR HOOPER:** Hello everybody, my name is Peter Hooper. Together with my wife I have owned NAD-12 since 1973. Could we have the first slide, please? Several issues with this project directly affect me. The visual impact on NAD-12, neighbour benefit sharing, Morrisons Gap Road upgrades and Crawney access. Now, apparently existing screening can be a mitigating factor to locate turbines  
15 much closer than the 3K guideline. Now, how fortunate for the Applicant, but how bad for me? The Applicant achieves the benefit of compliance by relying on my asset on my land. The Applicant has use of my vegetation screening for visual impact compliance without my consent or agreement. Seven turbines, 64 to 70, are under 3Ks from my residence. T69 is just 1.3Ks away. That is far too close,  
20 irrespective of any screening and certainly not fair and reasonable without a neighbour benefit or impact agreement.

Next slide, please. I am concerned the Applicant may have conditions of control over native vegetation screening on my property. I am also concerned that there  
25 will be a burden and impost to maintain that screening together with unforeseeable other constraints and impacts, thereby limiting future uses within my property.

Next slide, please. The Applicant's use of my vegetation screening seriously limits my bushfire control methods. During the recent volatile bushfire period I had to  
30 consider the likely need to remove extensive vegetation. In fact, both my neighbours had vegetation close to their residence bulldozed for fire protection just three years ago.

Next slide, please. Now, instead of benefit sharing my dilemma is better  
35 considered as compensation or payment for impact as outlined in the draft private agreement guidelines currently issued by the Department of Planning. How can I agree to a plan based on proposed turbines with no clarification of further impacts on my property? Hence I ask the Commissioners to consider retrospective agreements to be negotiated at any time during the life of the project. Now, two  
40 neighbour agreements presented to me by the Applicant in 2020 and 2021 were dismissed following extensive and thorough legal advice.

The next slide, please. Why only 35 per cent for Crawney? There is no detail on how the Crawney access will actually work or whether it's actually constructible.  
45 It seems Crawney is the only corridor for blades. It's not a workable road, as such. It shows that this project fails to have a proper access for oversized, overmass vehicles.

5 Last slide, please. The upgrade to the corner at NAD-12 is unresolved since the Applicant's massive retaining walls and road widening for this corner were rejected by Tamworth Council. It is just not possible for oversized, overmassed vehicles to pass this corner without significant removal of native vegetation and road widening. I fear for the outcome of Morrisons Gap Road upgrade. The ambiguous wording in the draft conditions of consent provide absolutely no clarity that the native vegetation in the road corridor will be protected. So to conclude, my screening should be included in a neighbour impact agreement available for the life of the project or remove seven turbines from the project. To preserve the unique character of Morrisons Gap Road should be for light traffic only. And at 10 Crawney, the western access should be a workable road for all construction traffic as 40 of the 47 turbines and subsequent infrastructure are located at the Crawney end of the project. Thank you. I welcome any questions.

15 **MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, Mr Hooper, for your submission. Sorry, we have got one question from Commissioner Grant.

20 **MS GRANT:** I was interested in your suggestion about the retrospective agreements. I wondered if that was - there was some examples that you might be able to refer to in a submission for us to consider further or how that sort of - legally that option works. Is there something that perhaps you could submit as part of a submission following today?

25 **MR HOOPER:** I don't quite understand what you are asking.

**MS GRANT:** I have not heard of the concept of the retrospective agreements, so I'm just wondering that you were proposing that the ability for your compensatory or neighbour agreements to be made at any time.

30 **MR HOOPER:** When the agreements are put to you it's in - the implications there that, you know, you take this offer now. This offer is only available now. You know, that in future these agreements won't be open. And so what I'm asking is that they should be available at any time.

35 **MS GRANT:** Okay. Thank you.

40 **MS SYKES:** So I would like to now call up speaker Megan Trousdale from the Odgers and McClelland Exchange Stores.

45 **MS TROUSDALE:** Good morning. I am Megan Trousdale, I'm a writer and shopkeeper. I was on the community consultative committee that was disbanded in May 2022. Our family - next slide, please. Our family owns Odgers and McClelland Exchange Stores at 81 Jenkins Street. Our land backs on to the proposed private road behind the Peel Inn for transporting up to six oversized overmass vehicles for nine months carrying wind turbine blades. We have a

residence designed for the rear of our shop. It is our hope that we will build it for use by our children or my parents.

5 Our heritage-listed property is 135 years old, established in the 1890s, and we have run it as a business for 25 years. Next slide, please. This month our small business in Nundle received an international accolade. We were listed in the shopkeeper's best 100 shops for 2023. That's worldwide. Our store is a destination and it is a heritage experience of the building, the traditional stock on the shelves, and the surrounding rural landscape that make it a shop worth travelling for. We  
10 participate in the annual Tamworth Regional Heritage Week and we have won two awards for building conservation and adaptive reuse.

15 Next slide. Our property is among nine heritage listed buildings and curtilage in Nundle potentially impacted by the Hills of Gold Wind Farm transport route and a permanent change in landscape character. Tourism is essential to the operation of our business. There are times when tourists through the door make up 100 per cent of our business. We are listed on the VisitNSW website, have featured in Government social media, as well as - next slide, please - next slide. Next slide. Next slide. So we featured in the Australian Women's Weekly, Country Style,  
20 Sydney Weekender, the Sydney Morning Herald. Our website includes testimonials from Restoration Australia presenter Sibella Court and urban designer Linda Gregorio says:

25 "This store is without doubt one of the best retail, if not the best stores in regional Australia."

30 Next slide, please. Next slide. We have hosted book lunches on our verandah with gourmet farmer Matthew Evans. Next slide. And Galah magazine editor Annabelle Hickson. We have a strong following online with 13,000 followers on Instagram and 6,000 subscribers to our seasonal newsletter. Next slide.

35 The mountain range is central to the distinctiveness of Nundle and Hanging Rock and the visitor experience. When I look at the mountain range now I imagine the additional 190 hectares of native vegetation that will be cleared for infrastructure, the associated biodiversity loss and animals that will be displaced or killed by habitat loss, bird and bat strike or burrow trauma. As I walk around the village and surrounding roads I note mature trees, fences and maybe even houses that would need to be removed to make way for heavy vehicles.

40 The entrance to the village will be industrialised. There has been no assessment of the visual impact of fencing or removing mature trees at the entrance to the village and the civic corner of Tamworth Regional Council. It is not known whether the Peel River bridge at the entrance to Nundle will need replacing to carry the heaviest load of 171 tonne.

45 We cannot expose our family to the associated risk of lost income from reduced tourism resulting from wind farm construction and ongoing operation. We are

already stopping investing in new product ranges and introducing building improvements. If Hills of Gold Wind Farm is approved we will need to close our store and seek income elsewhere. This undoes everything we have worked for 25 years, not just as a family but as a cooperative group of business owners.

5

The assessment that 47 wind turbines on the mountain range would have limited impacts on tourism is wrong. It will close our tourism business and have implications for other tourism businesses in Nundle and surrounding LGAs. Please recommend rejection of Hills of Gold Wind Farm and instead encourage investment in renewable energies at sites with evidence of access, away from national parks and people.

10

**MS SYKES:** Thank you very much for your submission. We don't have any other questions at this point. Thank you very much.

15

**MS TROUSDALE:** Thank you.

**MS SYKES:** I would now like to call the next speaker, Peter Gill.

20

**MR GILL:** IPC members and attendees. I am Peter Gill, Tamworth resident. I speak in opposition. Further supporting detail will be provided in a written submission.

25

I graduated as a civil engineer in 1976, now retired, and spent my life working predominantly in hard dollar contracting with field experience in quarrying, road, rail and large site works, plus extensive experience compiling work procurement proposals in Australia and PNG. This has included civil works proposals for several wind farms. Ordinarily I would support renewable energy initiatives if they were economical, fit with the community both locally and wider, and respect the environment and scenic vistas. In this case, Hills of Gold, the nature of the terrain increases the complexity and cost of earthworks, environmental controls and post project remediation. It presents comparatively higher risks for consequential environmental damage through ground slippage, erosion of sedimentation, removal of mature ecosystems and alteration of vistas.

30

35

Specifically regarding the recommended conditions of consent, RCC, modifications to the RCC and additional conditions need to be added to address at least the following: Throughout there appears to be a deference to the detailed design phase. This is perhaps due to the inherent nature of SSI listed projects in that the process is being fast-tracked. It is suggested that consideration be given to having controls which prevent the unfettered use of detailed design as a medium to-do-as-suits. At RCC stage it's my belief that the work methodology needs to be locked down, form and function of the works defined, appreciating that some minor incidental adjustments may need to be made. The basic scope and quantities should be available. The RCC is couched in the role of the DPHI secretary as the arbiter, in some cases powers appeared to override those of legislated approval bodies. What recourse is available should a matter of public interest arise? At the

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45

end of project life the actual scope of demolition and reinstatement appears poorly defined. Ie, are filled to be removed and cuts reinstated, topsoiled and revegetated?

5 There are inconsistencies in the haulage routes, OSM, between RCC table 7.2, the figure Hills of Gold Wind Farm transport route Nundle to site, clause B30, and table 7.2 lay-bys on Barry Road of similar size to others on OSM routes.  
10 Regarding the DPHI obtaining independent expert advice on constructability, soil and water assumptions, this review repeated my initial concerns regarding stability, constructability, erosion and sedimentation. In response, the following points are made: disturbance of in-place low to medium erodibility soils during  
15 construction reduces inherent in-place cohesion and exposes faces to weathering. There is a trade-off between batters slopes, long-term erodibility, stability and level of ongoing maintenance required. Considering 30-plus years of life are required the practices and experience of TfNSW in maintaining the public road networks are perhaps more appropriate. Ie, less steep batters.

20 The few cross-sections provided show trafficable widths of 5 metres with a .5 metre shoulder. This in my view will represent some challenges to the passage of a 5.3 metre wide load gracing up to 170 tonne, or the passing of two concrete trucks during foundation pours. They will happen at about 20 loads an hour.

25 Road spray and slurry in wet conditions, often seen as sprayed on roadside vegetation, is a source of sedimentation which is difficult to manage. There is no mention of this, likewise dust control. I remain to be convinced the RCC as presented demonstrates a wholistic appreciation from which an acceptable level of confidence in project execution can be derived. Thank you.

30 **MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, Mr Gill. I just had one question. It's probably just if you could explain a little bit further with your expertise. You mentioned - and I just took a few notes here so bear with me - but in terms of the constructability or impacts on the construction related to the removal of topsoil and what impacts that would have on the stability. Could you just explain that a little bit further for me?

35 **MR GILL:** Yes. Difficult in a short time perhaps. But, look, the whole process of building something requires removal of topsoil. Topsoil is something that usually has little structural capability, so therefore - I mean it is topsoil, it's just used to spread back over batters and, you know, eventually revegetate them. That process  
40 breaks up that topsoil as it sits in situ; you have a whole lot of microorganisms, root fibres and all that in it. I guess that's what drives that consideration. And the other thing is, I mean, the soils themselves whilst they are sitting there are homogenous. You start breaking them up you then expose new faces to weathering.

45 **MS SYKES:** Okay. Thank you. Thank you very much.

**MR GILL:** Thank you.

**MS SYKES:** Do you have any questions?

**MR GILL:** Thank you.

5

**MS SYKES:** I would just like to call our next speaker, Gail Cynick who - from - representing Nundle Sport and Recreation Club Ltd.

10 **MS CYNICK:** Good morning. I'm here to speak on behalf of Cheryl Sipple. She couldn't be here today due to family illness but I'm just here to speak for her.

15 My name is Cheryl Sipple, I am 57 years old and I was born and raised in Nundle. I believe the Hills of Gold Wind Farm is a fantastic idea for the environment and the Nundle-Hanging Rock area. I'm secretary/treasurer of the Nundle Sport and Recreation Club. The club has been around since the 1950s. The land we sit on was generously donated by the Payne family and our goal is the same as every board before us and every board to come after us: To keep the club going for the benefit of the community.

20 Growing up in Nundle one thing I remember is everything - everyone had a job. Forestry, local council, farmhands, businesses including the famous Peel Inn, the best bakery with the best mince pies, butcher shop, fuel, and takeaway food at two locations. Even a bank. Two banks if you count the post office. Sadly over my lifetime the businesses have gone. The jobs have dried up, people have had to  
25 move out of the area to find work.

30 Back in 1978 there were so many kids at the local school and a class was housed in the upper - supper room next door. We even had a high school until mid 80s. Today the local school is primary only and only has about 30 students. We even had our own football team here called the Magpies. Don't forget the winter Brass Monkeys tennis competition - what fun we had. Thirty years ago if you didn't put up your name down and play lawn bowls you would miss out. There was 42 bowlers, now we have eight. There were only two when my husband and I started playing. When we first started the club they use to pay a greenkeeper, a cleaner  
35 and bar staff. But with continued rising costs it's now taken care of by the dedicated band of volunteers. It's the only way for the club to survive.

40 Over my lifetime the town has slowly died with no solid permanent employment. The town is unable to keep families here long-term. Even as a kid in Nundle I remember there were so many people playing golf they had to have a babysitter to look after us kids at the clubhouse while our parents played golf. Where has everyone gone?

45 As the world thankfully moves away from dirty fossil fuels we need to look to the future because a world without coal power is fast approaching and we need to get on with replacing it. I hear other people saying that they support renewable energy but just in their backyard - but just not in their backyard. Well, I say why not in

our backyard? Why can't we do our bit to help the energy needs? Look after the environment and the generations that will follow us. There is so many of us who are more than happy to welcome this industry with open arms. Growing up we learned about the ozone layer. We have come a long way to repairing the hole but  
5 the ice keeps melting at this rate. All the stored carbon is going to be released into the atmosphere which could effectively double the Earth's current emission levels according to David Attenborough. A scary thought. We have all grown up knowing that fossil fuels are not good for the environment so here is our chance to contribute to our cleaner future.

10 The community fund is the icing on the cake. Just think about what we could accomplish with some permanent yearly funding. All groups are struggling with increasing costs, rates going up by 37 per cent, and our bowling club insurance has doubled in five years. In 2022 ENGIE gave \$20,000 to the local community grants  
15 and in 2023 they gave out just over 50,000. Thanks to ENGIE's latest round of community grants our club secured over 11,000 to cover our building and contents premium. We can't tell you how much this helped our little club. Just think about what we could accomplish with more funding. Our club needs a new air-conditioning system that will cost 20,000. The top toilets need gutting; that's a  
20 200,000 job. All the years the club has been there there's been no shower for the greenkeeper and no disabled facilities. It's difficult to earn that kind of money in a small town. We can apply for government grants but so is everyone else. With permanent yearly funding we could be in a position to do a bit each year or even take out a loan.

25 Now Tamworth Regional Council has decided that they want some of the town's funding. At the last council meeting it was said that the money from the wind farm would go into a separate account to compensate the community. Does this mean that all funding the council receives will come directly back into the Nundle  
30 community? Would council funding projects like infrastructure projects like some retirement housing, the units in Durban Street were built in the early 80s with plans to build more. Here we are, 40 years later, no more has been built. Would council erect a building for the food pantry to be housed permanently? What would we do for the good of the town without that funding that it was limited.

35 Council has said they want to compensate the community. Well, ENGIE was doing that and I don't think we need Tamworth Regional Council looking after those funds because it's highly unlikely these funds would flow through to the community. Putting all the money into the community fund means the community  
40 would distribute the funds and not just the council to make the decision alone.

I would like to finish by saying the majority of Nundle says yes to this project. You only have to count the signs around the town and see that. It's in the perfect  
45 position. Let's embrace this opportunity to get some long-term employment opportunities and remember the more turbines means the better the benefits of the environment and the better the benefits for everyone. Let's move forward. Thank you. From Cheryl.

**MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, Gail, for speaking on behalf of Cheryl Sipple. Our next speaker is Matthew Langfield.

5 **MR LANGFIELD:** Thanks, Chair. I've only got a few points; I will add more in my submission that I will give to you guys.

10 My grandparents bought our store in the late 1960s. We were lucky enough to buy it around the end of 2016. ENGIE's idea for mitigation for what we will see and hear is cleaning a couple of trees. Now, ENGIE's plan to mitigate what we will see and hear is to plant some trees in our driveway. We won't be planting those there. They are too close to the house and they will be dropping limbs on our driveway and on our utes. And as for the land acquisition, the turbine host was offered the land before I bought it. I was offered second. I was lucky we were in the position  
15 that we could afford it, to enjoy the land that my grandparents worked so hard on and hopefully our family can enjoy it for a lot more years to come. So that's about it. There will be more in my submission to you guys. Cheers.

20 **MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, Matthew, and also I just wanted to thank you for our site and locality tour yesterday as well.

**MR LANGFIELD:** Thank you, guys.

25 **MS SYKES:** Thank you. I would just like to call up our next speaker, William Sylvester. Sorry, William Sylvester is calling in on the phone.

**MR SYLVESTER:** Hello, yes.

30 **MS SYKES:** We can hear you William. Thank you.

**MR SYLVESTER:** Am I right to present?

**MS SYKES:** All good to go.

35 **MR SYLVESTER:** Unfortunately I was not able to get my media through, so there was meant to be a photo of where the turbines will be around the proposed house site and then also there was a video to show some of the aspects of the property from the house site. But I will just start.

40 I'm William Sylvester and my family own Wombramurra Station, located at [REDACTED]. I'm part of a family business, Sylvester Cattle Co, that runs a beef cattle breeding and fattening operation. As a part of my family's succession I'm keen to take on the section of the property Wombramurra Station located in the southern corner, that is on a separate title and is comprised of  
45 approximately 900 hectares. There is an approved preliminary DA to a building and development of this section of the property at a location for the dwelling I choose due to its elevated views of the property, main access roads and

infrastructure. It's a really beautiful spot and, yeah, it will be really good long-term, I think, for a family I would like to bring up there.

5 The site will be within 2 kilometres of the closest proposed turbine WTG-22 and approximately 1 kilometre from the proposed transverse track. The proponent has not noted the existence of the preliminary DA however there has been no visual or noise assessments carried out for the nominated location, even though we requested so. The DPE assessment recommendations to IBC state in section 119:

10 "As discussed earlier there is possibility of future dwellings subject to approval processes. These warrant a lower weighting due to their uncertain nature and ability for them to be designed, sited and orientated to avoid or reduce impacts."

15 Also section 120:

"The potential dwelling locations could be located beyond 2 kilometres of the turbines and orientated away from the project to minimise impacts and in locations where the noise criteria could be met."

20 I wish to object to these statements as the project does not have approval and should not be restricted to build on sites that do not add maximum value to the land. And being a young person going forward and taking over a family business, it's probably something I quite hold dearly to me and it is something you shouldn't  
25 be taking that value away.

I would like to highlight the comments made by the peer review presented by the Hills of Gold Presentation Society in table 17:

30 "The lack of consideration of future effects and their impacts including operations, decommissioning and the effects of climate change."

It will be my generation who will be dealing with the decommissioning phase of these projects and the DPE recommendation in table 17 are inadequate and  
35 provide no confidence in the process for adjoining associated landholders as all the responsibility for the decommissioning is with the landholders that are facilitating the wind farm as well as the constructors.

40 Hills of Gold Wind Farm is not located in the red zone. As noted by the DPE there is a long detailed proposed conditions of consent. As commissioners you have the responsibility to see the flaws in this project greatly outweigh the potential energy production. This project should not have been approved as it sets a dangerous precedent for the future projects. If the Commission do consider approval it is vital  
45 in line with the DPE assessment turbines 9 to 11 and 53 to 63 need to be removed from this project and the preliminary DAs in place should add weight to this.

5 Turbine 24, 28 and 42 need to be removed due to biodiversity impacts and the  
proximity to our property. In addition, I request the removal of turbine 22 which is  
the closest proximity to the PDA, turbine 40 due to its proximity to the PDA and  
Ben Halls Nature Reserve which is one of the most pristine nature reserves in  
10 Australia. Turbine 39 due to its proximity to Ben Halls Nature Reserve and allow  
turbine 38 to microsite to a more suitable location. Turbine 12, as it is located on a  
high erosion slope 30 per cent or greater, and the constructability requires massive  
earth works, cut and fill on an already unstable area. I refer to extra information  
provided by the proponent in the report commissioned by the DPE by engineering  
specialist David Piccolo. Report appendix B.

15 Being 24 years old it will be my generation left to deal with the decommissioning  
of these types of projects. The DPE recommendations as cited in the assessment  
report and instruction consent B49 table 2 are totally inadequate and provide no  
protection for environmental or neighbouring non-associated landholders. It will  
be impossible to rehabilitate this site and the potential environmental and water  
pollution during construction and decommissioning have not been fully recognised  
and is completely underestimated.

20 **MS SYKES:** William, we have just come to the end of our time but are you  
coming - are you starting to conclude?

**MR SYLVESTER:** I have only got two sentences left.

25 **MS SYKES:** Okay. Thank you. Continue on.

30 **MR SYLVESTER:** Thank you. The project is located outside the designated  
renewable energy zone. Will have disastrous repercussions for the environment  
and biodiversity or such a sensitive - of such a sensitive and has no social licence.  
The project needs to be rejected by the IPC. Thank you very much.

35 **MS SYKES:** William, thank you very much for your submission there. Just for  
clarification in terms of locality, you mentioned the closest turbine for proximity  
was 22?

**MR SYLVESTER:** Yes, 22 and then also 40 is in pretty reasonable proximity as  
well.

40 **MS SYKES:** Okay. Thank you very much. Thank you very much for your  
submission, William.

**MR SYLVESTER:** Thank you very much.

45 **MS SYKES:** I would like to call up now the next speaker, Rachel Webster.

**MS WEBSTER:** Good morning, my name is Rachel Webster. I speak today on  
behalf of the Upper Peel Landcare Group of which I've been a member for five

years. Also as an individual who has dedicated her lifestyle, education and career to environmental stewardship. My Landcare group and I are deeply concerned about the potential long-term impacts on biodiversity. We believe that the ecological costs outweigh the benefits of this project and it should not go ahead.

5

My personal, deep-seated need to care for the natural world began with a childhood on a small farm followed by a university degree in wildlife management. I then spent many years in ecological research and 15 years in indigenous culture and environmental education. I now own a small business based around our five acre Nundle farm with a shop front on Oakenville Street. Over my 20 year environmental science degree I - science career I have protested against reliance on fossil fuel energy. My early leaning was in support of this apparent clean and green energy project. This was until I started to look deeper into the impacts on biodiversity and I was reminded that renewable energy projects are but one solution amongst many to address climate crisis.

10

15

Our Landcare group shares the view that there is an important place for renewable energy projects, however these must not be at the expense of natural climate solutions. For example, can we justify the clearance of 190 hectares of land, eight hectares of which are endangered box gum woodland for 64 or 62 turbines with a realistic lifespan of 35 years? The trees to be cleared may have taken two centuries to grow. The estimated lifespan of the wind farm fails or pales in comparison. In the pursuit of reduced carbon emissions must we degrade at least 447 hectares of existing vegetation and soils which already act as a healthy, functioning carbon sink? I'm sure you also understand our group's frustration at the proposed clearance of 46.28 hectares of existing mature koala habitat. Meanwhile, our fellow Landcare community in nearby Gunnedah are working to create 45 hectares of new koala habitat.

20

25

30

Our Landcare group has successfully collaborated with other community groups, indigenous Elders and local council. As a group we are dependent on a shared vision for sustainability projects. Sadly our once cohesive community has been fractured and we have noted reduced community participation vital for the success of land care projects. Our group supports the Department's removal of 17 turbines to reduce visual noise and biodiversity impacts. However, we believe there are many, many indirect impacts which have not been addressed and must be considered. We have grave concern for the direct fragmentation of habitat due to transport and transmission lines and indirect fragmentation due to increased weed dispersal.

35

40

It does not take a university degree in ecology such as mine to observe how opportunist species can invade a disturbed area and threaten biodiversity. Who will manage further - the further potential spread of these weeds? Landcare groups in this area have spent countless volunteer hours establishing thousands of plants to create wildlife corridors.

45

The proposed removal of street trees, some of which were planted by local residents, is not supported by our group. These street trees provide habitat but are also essential in reducing reflective heat, cooling our urban areas by up to 10 degrees, an important climate management strategy. Ben Halls Gap Nature Reserve and Crawney Pass National Park are an integral part of the wildlife corridors that our group is trying to preserve. The Environmental Protection Biodiversity and Conservation Act has been put in place to protect ecologically significant ecosystems and species. The Ben Halls Gap sphagnum moss cool temperate rainforest is listed under the EPBC Act as a critically endangered community. The location of this community on the boundary of Ben Halls Gap Nature Reserve already makes it vulnerable to edge effects. Its close proximity to the boundary of the wind farm makes it even more so. Erosion from land clearance and earthworks pose a serious threat to this sensitive community.

The existing placement of turbines 32, 33, 39, 40, 43 and 45 near the internationally significant biodiversity area are non-compliant with the Department's recommended conditions. We believe the recommended 130 metre blade tip buffer from the boundary of the reserve should be increased. We also agree with the recommended 50 metre blade tip buffer from existing native vegetation canopy. We ask that the six turbines that I mentioned are unable to meet these buffers and should be removed.

Our group believes that the New South Wales Biodiversity Offsets Scheme is impressive on paper but holds little true ecological weight. My many years of field study have reenforced that specific environmental parameters of a subalpine microclimate cannot be replicated elsewhere. The pre-European remnant vegetation and subalpine vegetation on the top of the range is unique. In the complex world of biodiversity it is never like for like. We believe as the project stands that there will still be a net loss of biodiversity. Thank you.

**MS SYKES:** Rachel, thank you very much. I just wondered, could you please for our records just repeat the number - the turbine numbers that you -

**MS WEBSTER:** I flew through those, sorry. Well, the main ones are 32, 33, 39 and 40 - 32, 33, 39 and 40. But also 43 and 45.

**MS SYKES:** Thank you very much. That's very helpful.

**MR MARSHALL:** If I might just get you to say a little bit more to expand on your views about the effectiveness of biodiversity offsets. I'm just interested to hear a little more about those thoughts.

**MS WEBSTER:** The effectiveness of the biodiversity offsets?

**MR MARSHALL:** Mmm.

**MS WEBSTER:** Okay, my chief concern given my work in subalpine communities is they are essentially an island ecosystem. You can't replicate the specific parameters in terms of temperature, rainfall, snow melt; all of those things in another place. You simply can't do that. So that if we believe that we can sort of  
5 remove that ecosystem and put it somewhere else, it just - it's just impossible to do that. So essentially it's an endemic ecosystem that can't be placed somewhere else. That's my major concern.

**MR MARSHALL:** If I could just have a follow-up question. I mean, I think I  
10 understand that the kind of alpine flora is under some threat down further south in Kosciuszko and places like that because of climate change, I just wonder whether there's any projection of the likely impacts of a change in climate on these subalpine environments?

**MS WEBSTER:** Well, slight - just slight - slightly off topic to that, but still  
15 connected is the impact that I studied down there and that was fire. So the impact of fire on that ecosystem has basically destroyed that ecosystem. It hasn't recovered. The ecosystem that we have here faces similar impacts. They have seen in the study that I did there, which is now about 10 years old, they have seen some  
20 movement in change in species as a result of climate change, but the increased disbursement of weeds from transport is a major - one of their major concerns and also a concern I have for this project.

**MR MARSHALL:** Thank you.  
25

**MS WEBSTER:** Thanks.

**MS SYKES:** I would now like to call our next speaker Shawn Stone. Our next  
30 speaker is Shawn Stone.

**MR STONE:** Can you hear me? Can you hear me.

**MS SYKES:** Yes. Thank you. Thank you, Shawn.

**MR STONE:** Yes. Great. I will just get straight into it. I was reviewing the  
35 application of the Applicant and I couldn't find any specific Aboriginal, biodiversity or engineering reports at least for the western connector track and the territory that this track encompasses. The western connector track appears to be drawn irrespective of terrain with slopes in excess of 40 per cent. I couldn't  
40 identify Crown land approval to access the western connector track from Crawney Road and how this access is going to be mitigated traversing a high conservation value reserve and Wombramurra Creek. I found it disturbing that no effective photo montages were created to illustrate back to community the visual impact of the ancillary infrastructure above Teamsters Rest campground known as the  
45 Governor's Shelf. The area in and around Teamsters Rest campground is of particular visual community value for obvious reasons. The fact that no photo montaging has been illustrated for this part of the project would suggest the

Applicant does not want to show the sheer magnitude of earthworks and batters support required on a slope over 40 per cent. The industrialisation of the landscape specifically itself on the Crawney Road would have a negative impact on local cultural connection to the land and regional visitors alike.

5

I have not seen any photo montaging of mine clearing for transmission lines and the impacts that clearing and transmission line infrastructure may have on the aesthetic value of my property. It has not been made clear to me how dust would be controlled on Crawney Road in out front my home, and a maintenance schedule for Crawney Road has not been addressed. All in all my family do not support the project and we are not impressed how the Applicant has informed the community with its visual and auditory impacts.

10

In closing the Department must do more to prevent renewable energy projects from dividing rural communities. It has been well documented since 2006 that wherever these projects go community division follows and the methods that this applicant has been able to use must stop with future generations of rural communities in Australia. Thank you.

15

**MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, Shawn, for your submission. I wanted to check whether we had any questions.

20

**MS GRANT:** Yes, sorry it was a little bit broken at the very beginning. Could you just clarify where it is that your property is? We went to Teamsters Rest yesterday, so if it's in that vicinity then we are familiar with that.

25

**MR STONE:** Yes. Yes, the Teamsters Rest and that high conservation value reserve, that reserve was presented high conservation values in the Brigalow Belt decision and with the Department of Land and rural travelling stock route reserve system that whole reserve pretty much from the DAG Sheep Station all the way to the top of the pass is of great concern to me and the visual impact that the project seems to - would have on that area.

30

**MS GRANT:** Thank you.

35

**MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, Shawn, for your submission.

**MR STONE:** Thank you.

**MS SYKES:** And our final speaker before we have our lunch break is Nick Bradford.

40

**MR BRADFORD:** Good afternoon. I'm grateful for the opportunity to be able to address you today. My name is Nick Bradford, I'm a resident of Nundle along with my wife Kylie and 14-year-old son Zachary. We purchased a Nundle-based business Nundle Woollen Mill in June 2007. Our move from Sydney to Nundle was the best move we could have ever made.

45

Nundle is our home; Nundle is very much part of our lives.

5 I attended the first - the very first wind farm meeting with [REDACTED] and about  
six local community members in February 2018. [REDACTED] was a wind farm  
representative engaged by Someva, the early owner of this project. I clearly  
remember [REDACTED] saying that if the community do not want this project to go  
ahead it will not go ahead. That was the last assurance we were ever given by  
[REDACTED], Someva, Wind Energy Partners or ENGIE in regard to community  
concern. This has been a project where they have failed to listen or even consult in  
10 it an effective way most of the time. A development manager at ENGIE promised  
me that she would come to the woollen mill to chat about the project. This has  
never happened. Too often ENGIE has blamed COVID for not following up on  
meetings. This excuse is now very well outdated.

15 As residents of Nundle for most of us educating ourselves against corporate bodies  
like Someva or ENGIE who have had great experience in managing communities  
and their expectations this task has been overwhelming. For six years we have lost  
sleep, lost quality family time, suffered increased stress and mental anguish trying  
to bring ourselves up to speed as quickly as possible. Small communities like ours  
20 are always behind the eight ball while the likes of big corporate dismiss our  
concerns while ridiculing us as the vocal minority. It is clear the majority of the  
community do not want this project; we are the vocal majority.

25 One of the biggest disappointments was the recent approval, albeit with  
conditions, by the Department of Planning. We have been encouraged by many to  
keep up the fight; people power is important. The social licence of projects like  
these is a powerful part of the assessment process. We hope that this IPC process  
is not simply lip service and that you will generally listen to the serious concerns  
30 regarding the underestimated extreme road construction and environmental and  
visual impacts.

The ridge line was more heavily timbered just 20 years ago. The host landholder  
told us that during a visit to USA about 15 years ago he saw wind turbines from a  
plane window and thought he could do the same to his Nundle-held land. The  
35 Department acknowledges there has been land clearing on the site prior to the  
approval of vegetation clearing under this development application. This issue  
came up at one of the - at one and the only public meeting hosted by the developer  
held in this hall in March 2018, nearly six years ago.

40 The Department Assessment Report states that some areas were cleared prior to  
approval and a biodiversity conservation order has been issued for these areas.  
Some clearing occurred with the approval of local land services which are  
included in the calculation of offset credit liability for the project. Neither makes it  
right and sets a dangerous precedence for any development in Australia. This is  
45 also a major obstacle to the social licence of this project.

In early discussions with the former Department staff member [REDACTED] the community was told that any recent unapproved clearing on the range -

5 **MS SYKES:** Excuse me, Nick. If I could just interrupt you there. I mean, certainly continue on with your submission but if you could please avoid making comments or noting individual names -

**MR BRADFORD:** Sure.

10 **MS SYKES:** - throughout your submission. You know, we do have obviously a complaints process that is separate to this.

**MR BRADFORD:** I would like to move on to the devaluation of community spirit and cohesion within the Nundle and Hanging Rock communities. Some  
15 neighbours now cannot talk with other neighbours, long-term friendships are well strained, and the unwritten rule now is just don't talk about the wind farm. Last Friday evening Nundle celebrated Australia Day at the Nundle sport and rec club, the problem is only a handful of people turned up. For the second year in a row there were no nominations for Nundle Citizen of the Year, Nundle Junior of the  
20 Year or Nundle Australian of the Year. I can remember only five or so years ago we would have had 150 to 200 people at the Nundle Public School for a bacon and egg breakfast and some sheep shearing. The Australia Day awards were a great highlight of the Nundle calendar. The wind farm has killed off our enthusiasm.

25 Another major event, the Nundle Go for Gold Festival, held over the Easter weekend was a wonderful event for Nundle. Attracting up to 18,000 people to our little village, bringing in an estimated income of over 350,000 for the stall holders. I was on the committee for the best part of 12 years in various roles including committee chair for six years. In 2020 the committee voted to accept an in-kind  
30 sponsorship from ENGIE. I along with a few other committee members pleaded for the committee not to accept this sponsorship. We were in good financial position and their support was not needed. As a consequence of the accepted of the ENGIE support a number of community members withdrew their willingness to volunteer at the festival. The festival died in that moment. It is unlikely to be  
35 resurrected. This is just a couple of examples of how deep the community division runs here.

I plead with you, members of the IPC, to remember the small communities of Nundle, Hanging Rock, Crawney and Timor. We have dedicated six years of our  
40 lives to make sure if this wind farm was to go ahead it would go ahead having considered every aspect of the development. There are so many issues still unresolved yet ENGIE wants this project approved with conditions. This is like asking the council to approve a residential build with only half the building plans prepared. An approval with conditions leaves the community in limbo for  
45 another - possibly another six years, maybe longer.

There is further possibility that this project may never be built; transport routes, access approvals and First Nations acceptance still to be sought. It will be prudent to reject this project to allow many other projects in the assessment phase throughout New South Wales, projects with good community support, projects that have less environmental impact, and projects that are within the renewable energy zone of New South Wales. Thank you very much.

**MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, Nick. Thanks very much for your submission, Nick.

So I guess at this point we are now up to a short break for lunch. We will come back for our next speaker who is Bill Stinson at 12.55. Thank you very much everyone.

**<THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 12.10 PM**

**<THE MEETING RESUMED AT 1.01 PM**

**MS SYKES:** Good afternoon, and welcome back to the first part of the afternoon session for the public meeting for Hills of Gold Wind Farm, SSD 9679, day one. I would just like to welcome our first speaker for this session, Bill Stinson.

**MR STINSON:** Thank you. Firstly I would like to thank the committee for giving me the opportunity to speak and I request that the Chair, Mrs Sykes, stands down on the basis of apprehended bias. The High Court of Australia *Charistias v Charistias* HCA 29 [2021] in their judgment said the apprehension of bias principle is if a judge is disqualified:

"If a fair-minded lay observer might reasonably apprehend that the judge might not bring an impartial mind to the resolution of the question that judge is required to decide. That principle gives effect to the requirement that justice should both be done and be seen to be done".

Reflecting a requirement fundamental to the common law system of adversary of trial that it is conducted by an independent and impartial tribunal.

"Its application requires two steps. First, it requires the identification of what it is said might lead a judge ... to decide a case other than on its legal and factual merits and second there must be articulated a logical connection between the matter and the feared departure from the judge deciding the case on its merits. Once these two steps are taken, the reasonableness of the asserted apprehension of bias can then be ultimately assessed."

Further, at common law and under the Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act the test of bias rule extends beyond whether there is actual bias to whether there is an appearance of bias. An appearance or apprehension of bias may occur if in the circumstances the fair-minded lay observer may reasonably apprehend that

the decision maker may not bring an impartial mind to their decision. This represents the principles that justice must not only be done but must be seen to be done and that decision making process must be fair and impartial.

5 One of the reasons for my apprehension of bias, from the Independent Planning Commission website Mrs Sykes bio:

10 "Clare is the founding principal of a strategy and advisory consultancy specialising in resources and future energy value chains. Clare's career has included leading complex multi stakeholder initiatives including resource sector technology and -"

15 **MS SYKES:** Mr Stinson. Mr Stinson, could I please interrupt you now. I just want to - I just want to - as we opened in our opening statement, that there is a thorough process with the Independent Planning Commission in terms of conflicts of interest. This is obviously not the forum to make complaints or allegations about an individual or the Commission process, however you are very welcome to make that submission through the IPC website. So could we please direct your submission today towards the merits of the application. We would like to hear 20 your response in terms of the Departmental assessment, the recommendations, plus the recommended conditions. Thank you.

25 **MR STINSON:** Okay. Well, I will put it to you that I will put this in writing and I ask that you excuse yourself from the committee.

Okay. The specific reason - one of the specific reasons that I am objecting to the Hills of Gold wind project, as we know my background is building and there's the complimentary relationship between the built environment and the natural environment. We worry about the heritage of the built environment, and indeed 30 we look at buildings that are maybe 100, 150 years old, we look to preserve those. What we should also look at preserving is our environmental heritage. These particular areas of biodiversity have been in place for tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of years, and it's our responsibility to ensure that we make - or make sure that the environment - environmental heritage is also 35 preserved. There are other means of supporting our energy generation system and there is absolutely no need for this project to go ahead.

40 So thank you, and as I say I will be formally putting my reasons for my apprehension of bias and that I would like to see that this tribunal is fair and reasonable. And I also put it to you that if Mrs Sykes doesn't stand down then this could be the subject of appeal. Thank you.

45 **MS SYKES:** Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Mr Stinson. Our next speaker is David Beirman.

**MR BEIRMAN:** Okay. Good afternoon everybody. And I'm not going to call on anybody, any member of the committee to resign so you can be relaxed there.

Ladies and gentlemen, my name is David Beirman. My wife Liz and I have been property owners in Nundle since 2018. We have been resident here since 2020, which means that we are relatively newcomers to the community. We first visited Nundle in 2017 more or less by accident and we just fell in love with the village.

5 We were inspired to settle here in Nundle primarily because of the sublime beauty of the region and its unspoilt hills of gold. We also love the communality of Nundle and we have been quickly accepted as part of the community.

10 The proposal to desecrate the magnificent western ridge of the Great Dividing Range between Hanging Rock and Timor on the altar of renewable energy for the short operational life of a 25 to 35 years in my opinion is an outrage. If I may paraphrase from His Majesty King Charles III, our pristine landscape is set to be abused by 47 carbuncles, or if ENGIE gets its way 62. Their construction will cause untold damage to the landscape, flora and fauna and turn the hills of gold  
15 hill into the hills of hideous spines. Forty seven 230-metre tall turbines will be a blot on the landscape even after they cease their operational life, and it's left to landowners to determine the post operational fate of the turbines. If this project is approved as planned then it's going to - sorry, then the proponent will be permitted to damage the environment, erect the carbuncles and leave someone else - that is  
20 landowners - to clean up the mess. What a very convenient proposal for the State Government in Sydney to say they approve a temporary bandaid solution to fossil fuel dependence. If the NSW Government is so keen on this project why do not they approve the erection of two of these turbines - the equivalent height of the MLC building which I used to work in once upon a time - on top of New South  
25 Wales Parliament House.

I have spent 43 years of my professional life either as a tourism industry professional or as a tourism academic. This one is just one of my several books on that subject. The proponent's claim that the wind farm would be a tourism  
30 attraction is simply laughable. Based on empirical research conducted in Germany, Scotland and even the proponent's own inclusion of some research by a University of Newcastle scholar - that's University of Newcastle here in New South Wales - even the proponents - so it showed that there was no evidence - let me say again, no evidence that the presence of a wind farm was going to be a  
35 tourism attraction for more than a miniscule minority of people who might come and visit a place. Remember there are wind farms on hundreds of destinations all over the world. So visually the presence of - visually the presence of carbuncles or wind farms, wind turbines atop a natural ridge would constitute a natural - would constitute a tourism deterrent.

40 Now, the IPC is well aware that there are places in New South Wales which welcome wind farms, and rather than impose them on us to spoil our environment and divide our community, which has already been clearly shown here, to place these places in areas where they are much more accepted by the local community.  
45 And there are many communities that are happy to accept them.

Okay. So if wind farms are a deterrent to tourism in Nundle and surrounds what will attract visitors, please locals, and enhance the economic benefit of increased visitation. A number of us in Nundle and Tamworth are currently exploring the benefits of the area's potential dark sky status, which has been enjoyed in  
5 Coonabarabran and the Warrumbungles since 2016. The Weekend Australian, which is a recent one, in November - mid November actually did an entire feature on astrotourism. Astrotourism in my view is really one of the potential futures.

10 The Tamworth regional - so we have actually had discussions involving the Tamworth Regional Astronomy Club, the Tamworth Regional Council, businesspeople in Nundle and more importantly a remarkable lady called Marnie Ogg who with her husband Fred Watson - probably Australia's most famous astronomer - are actually involved with an astrotourism project or an astrotourism organisation. We think dark sky tourism could be a massive boon to Nundle.  
15 Marnie Ogg, who actually wrote the very first successful application for international dark skies for Coonabarabran, thinks that Nundle is a fantastic place for it, as is Hanging Rock, Crawney and all the areas where the wind farm is supposed to go. They think it's perfect for it.

20 The construction phase of the - sorry, the construction phase of the wind farm obviously would involve navigational lighting and would also involve a lot of flash lighting which could - I don't say it would, but it could compromise the viability of our area as a dark skies region. I'm not going to tell lots of fibs here. The evidence shows that the majority of our community - of the Nundle  
25 community and Hanging Rock and surrounds - prefer tourism to be attracted to their area by our area's natural assets. We opposed our area being ruined by a project which would despoil our environment and damage the visual beauty. Nundle's natural beauty should not be sacrificed to satisfy the unthinking mania for renewable energy at any cost on the part of the State Labor Government, the  
30 enviro-fascist gangrenes, as I refer to them, and other woke folk in Sydney's inner-city. Where I used to come from by the way, so, you know, I was part of the problem before.

I'm sure most of those communities would not countenance this kind of project in  
35 their own backyards and I don't think neither should we. So, ladies and gentlemen, thanks for listening. I sincerely hope the IPC shows it is truly independent and rejects this abominable proposal.

40 **MS SYKES:** Did you have any questions? Thank you very much, David. I would just now like to call up our next speaker, John Krsulja who is speaking on behalf of DAG Sheep Station.

45 **MR KRSULJA:** Yes, good afternoon, I am representing the DAG Sheep Station and also representing myself, John Krsulja, as I community member.

**MS SYKES:** John, could I just - could you perhaps when you do could delineate as you are speaking whether you are representing the station and then moving on to representing yourself?

5 **MR KRSULJA:** Yes, it should be obvious.

**MS SYKES:** Great. Okay thank you.

10 **MR KRSULJA:** Thank you. I would like to raise my concern to the IPC that the developer ENGIE and this development has not thoroughly or thoughtfully addressed the importance of the current use of the development corridor in the best interests of New South Wales.

15 The DAG Sheep Station is located 10 kilometres south of the village of Nundle on Crawney Road and runs alongside Wombramurra Creek. It is represented in the EIS as a non-associated dwelling number 34. We support the recommendation by the Department to seal the unsealed portion of Crawney Road for site access before construction not after construction which was suggested by ENGIE. We do not support the DP's recommendation for development approval.

20 We would like to advise the IPC there is no detail on Wombramurra Creek crossing through Crown's lands and that we rely on the quality of water from Wombramurra Creek for our stock and drinking water from our bore in times of low rainfall. Early consultation with Wind Energy Partners, back then, my wife and I were told that site works would be five days a week. We were guaranteed that. But the DA amendments now suggest six to 6.5 days. This will force the closure of our business in its current form.

30 Our business, the DAG Sheep Station, or it's commonly known as the DAG, is a wool shed complex consisting a wool shed that is 128 years old. It was part of the Wombramurra wool shed complex and Wombramurra Station. It includes workers cottages, shearers quarters, mess hall, and provides accommodation for up to 90 guests. My wife Belinda and I purchased the DAG in 2007 and undertook excessive renovations, transferring the complex into a unique award-winning venue. We have raised our two girls aged 17 and 16 here in Nundle over the last 35 16 years, and in the last four years we have taken into our home and raised a local 16-year-old girl and close friend to our family who was orphaned in 2020.

40 Since 2007 the DAG has hosted over 200 weddings and hundreds of functions, festivals and events contributing to the growth, employment and tourism currently enjoyed by Nundle. The DAG has consistently employed between three to six locals, and prior to COVID attracted thousands of visitors annually. Equating to over \$2 million annually towards Nundle and Tamworth's economy. And that's based on Destination NSW regional average night spend of \$191 a night.

45 So over 30 years that equates to about 60 million. If you compare that to what 11 million ENGIE is suggesting for the community, you can see the loss of one

business to this village has a major impact on Nundle and its Tamworth surrounds. The DAG is also a base for a plastering business that I have. I employ six full-time staff and that business is almost 30 years old located in Tamworth. We have won awards for heritage tourism, regional sustainability, boutique wedding, silver and bronze in unique accommodation at the NSW Tourism Awards. We have won tourism, restaurant and catering; unique accommodation at the Inland NSW Tourism Awards; and in 2015 we were inducted to the hall of fame for unique accommodation because of where we sit and the value of the DAG to the range. We have had songs written at the DAG Sheep Station during our song writer retreats and six of them - six of them have been awarded Golden Guitars by the Country Music Association of Australia.

The DAG over the last 16, 17 years has worked alongside Nundle Business Tourism Marketing Group, Destination Tamworth, Destination NSW, Inland NSW Tourism to support Nundle as a major tourism village capitalising on its natural surrounds. I want to read you a couple of quotes from the NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2030, and this was from the premier at the time, Gladys, that she said:

"The visitor economy is one of New South Wales' major exports. It contributes \$38 billion to our gross state product and employs almost 300,000 people. The presence of visitors adds to the state's prosperity and liveability and enhancing the vibrancy of our public and natural spaces and the lifestyle of local residences".

So one of their key features in that strategy was that regional New South Wales would be a key to the future of the State's visitor economy and the focus of the strategy. And that strategy was to be implemented by the Department of Planning who also has approved this development. This is another one from the pillar that they said they should finalise and deliver the New South Wales nature-based tourism strategy and grow the eco-wellbeing and eco-tourism and volunteer tourism sectors. From the 20-year-old economic vision from Regional New South Wales in 2018, it said:

"Tourism rates among the highest growth industries, placing Nundle in a prime position to capitalise on both regional population growth to the city of Tamworth and the close proximity to the Hunter region."

Part of the Tamworth Key Change Community Strategic Plan, "Their main aim should be to protect our natural environment."

They also say to love where you live and that your voice is the key to our region's future. And I would like to commend Tamworth Regional Council for their continued objection to this development proposal. With over 19 renewable energy projects in the pipeline for our region, it's not hard to see that over the next 30-year life of this proposal there will be dozens, if not hundreds, of renewable energy projects to approve within the New England region and the REZ zones of New

South Wales. So I say never has there been a more important time for the New South Wales Government and now the IPC charged with approval or rejection of this project to get the site selection program right.

5 The hills of gold that are Nundle, Hanging Rock, Crawney and Timor must be preserved in the interests of both future and current generations of New South Wales, their community members and their visitors. And the natural biodiversity that exists of our flora and fauna, water and soil must be protected and preserved for our future generations.

10

I just want to talk about myself briefly to give you an example of who I am and where I sit within this community. For 17 years that I've called DAG Sheep Station home in Nundle I have been President of the Nundle Business Tourism Marketing Group, President of the Go For Gold Festival, President of our P&C Association, President of the Great Nundle Dog Race, Steak Music Festival, and for 10 years involved as a committee member of the Hats Off to Country mid-year festival.

15

20 Over the last six years I have helped my community as current president of the Hills of Gold Preservation and I represented them for nearly five years as a community consultation member. And I implore the IPC that you read the notes from every community consultation committee. Within those notes you will find us asking questions that we were misled or misconceived, answers that were then later presented in amendment DAs. I do believe I'm qualified to know how  
25 volunteering time and how the community spirit works. I will be honest, the last six years have been the toughest in my business and family life. I attribute most of that to the Hills of Gold project.

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30 I am just one story of many stories within this community. But I tell you, there are many here that I know of that should this project get approval will never take part in committees or events that receive funding through ENGIE or this wind farm. There are many business owners, agricultural business owners, and employees and residents that have confided that if this wind farm is approved they may be forced to close their business or leave Nundle. So therefore the ENGIE presentations that  
35 show local employment, community enhancement funds, community support will mean nothing within a divided community and a dividing community that will remain dividing for generations to come. This project does not have community licence. The local supporters of the wind farm talk about bringing new families to the village, new businesses, new work for a greater Nundle, but fail to see that  
40 what is not good for all of Nundle is not good for Nundle. We cannot afford to continue to lose our community spirit. We must not risk or destroy the natural asset that surrounds Nundle, Hanging Rock, Crawney or Timor.

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45 I want to close by saying that at the DAG I walk around that 128-year-old wool shed sometimes after events have finished and I go around and turn off the lights and I admire its architecture and I'm always humbled by its beauty and the beauty that surrounds it and the choice of the location for it. But it makes me realise that I

can never own Wombramurra wool shed, that I'm only a custodian to protect and preserve it for its place in history. The history of Nundle was built on the sheep's back. The gold rush of old days and the rich agricultural history. We now live in a tourism era where the future will show places of natural beauty will be revered.

5

My final word is this: Let it be known that if the Hills of Gold Wind Farm is approved then nowhere or no place within New South Wales will be safe from the clutches of corporate profit under the guise of renewable energy. Our history is in your hands, and I only hope that you make the right decision for our future and recommend rejection of the Hills of Gold Wind Farm. Thank you.

10

**MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, John, for your submission there. Our next speaker is Svetlana Vlasoff.

15

**MS VLASOFF:** Sorry, everybody. I will start now, yes?

**MS SYKES:** Thank you very much.

20

**MS VLASOFF:** Hello, my name is Svetlana. I represent the multiple owners of lot 22 on Morrisons Gap Road. We are all members of one big extended family and we have collectively owned this property for over 40 years. Our property is accessed via easement from Morrisons Gap Road or on one on Shearers Road. The dwelling on the property has been identified as NAD-8. The closest turbine, number 70, is only 1,160 metres away and number 69 is only a few metres further. We share a boundary with the wind farm project. Our children grew up camping, hunting, fishing and foraging on this land with many owners and family members involved. The property is frequently used and occupied. This project will interfere with our enjoyment of our land.

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According to the assessments we will endure construction noise in close proximity, and thereafter visual impacts of over 30 hours of shadow flicker and noise emitted by the turbines for the life of the project.

35

Noise impact. They used a noise data from NAD-12 to estimate background noise on our property. Based on this estimate they allowed the turbines to generate higher noise levels at higher wind speeds because of the background noise raises at NAD-12 as wind gets stronger. But NAD-12 is located on ridge, our dwelling in the valley. It doesn't get as windy here, even with this dishonest assumption that they still have to operate turbines in noise-reduced mode to get the noise levels under the red line. I don't think the turbines will be compliant. They promised turbines very close to our property and based on, I guess, and a promise to keep them quiet it turns out they are not compliant and will they remove them?

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The visual impact by this project to our family will begin with travelling down Morrisons Gap Road where they propose to widen the road, remove all the beautiful trees and ferns. Then it is escalated as we have to travel through the construction site and for the life of the project drive around turbines. The

Independent Visual Assessment review pointed out the following: Local roads located within 500 metres of the turbine array became the subject of VIZ1 performance objectives. No public viewpoints have been selected and analysed in the in the LVIA along Morrisons Gap Road or Shearers Road within the project area.

The LVIA proposed significant road works along Morrisons Gap Road. These works would have resulted in significant tree removal which have opened up views to the turbines along the ridge line. In the area around the turbines 65 to 70, adjacent to Morrisons Gap and Shearers Road intersection several turbines are potentially highly visible and would dominate the view catchment. The turbines and associated works located within 500 metres of Morrisons Gap Road do not appear to comply with the visual magnitude performance objective.

The letter from Moir Landscape Architecture dated 10 September 2023 acknowledges that landscape character of the area will be modified:

"We consider the turbines from many public viewing locations along Morrisons Gap Road will cause more than a low level modification of the visual catchment and therefore along Morrisons Gap Road do not meet VIZ1 landscape scenic integrity performance objectives. The justification provided for the non-compliance with the low frequency road used combined with the short duration of exposure."

I disagree with the justification provided as it does not take into future account the development in the area and the ever increasing tourism. This road is busier now than when we bought our property and will be busier again in the future. The justification for non-compliance is merely an applicant's opinion.

NAD-8 is the second closest dwelling to the proposed wind farm and should have received very thorough assessments and proper photo montages. Instead, we only received desktop estimates. This is what they said:

"Desktop analysis indicates that the residence is surrounded by dense vegetation to the north, east and south but with more open views to the west. The curtilage appears to be cleared for up to 50 metres to the west of the residence. The ground falls away from the west towards the Barnard River. Views of the turbines would be possible. Trigonometrical analysis indicates trees beyond 50 metres from the residence and less than 20 metres high will not screen the turbines 66, 67, 68, 69 and 70. Trees between 20 and 30 metres high will provide partial screening. Full screens would be achieved for trees of a height of the order of 30 metres."

So based on the guess that the trees are exactly 30 metres high, exactly 50 metres from the house, or so close together there are no gaps between them and will remain in this configuration for the next 30 years, the Department allowed the sitting of turbines in close proximity. We wanted the actual assessment and the

Applicant was supposed to call us back with a suitable time and date, but they never did. Instead they asked our neighbour to take them around our property without our knowledge, but the neighbour declined to do so not wanting to trespass. The only way this could be acceptable is if you impose a condition that  
5 the turbines are not effectively screened the developer should come back and remove them. Also, at any stage during the life of the project if the trees are damaged by snow, wind, fire or drought, and the turbines become exposed, they should be taken down.

10 Additionally to NAD-8 there is an approved DA with a registered building envelope approximately 200 metres south-west from NAD-8 location. We have not acted on the DA apart from having pier holes dug and inspected. But having this DA, which now doesn't expire, is like having money to the bank. It adds value  
15 to our property and is important to preserve the possibility of constructing this house in the future. One day one of our children, adult grandchildren will carry out the construction. I have notified the Department of the existence of this DA a long time ago but they failed to mention it in their report.

20 The proximity of the wind farm next door will interfere with the future development on our property in the area of the approved building envelope, and if the approved building envelope is cleared for building works the visual, noise and shadow flicker impacts will become unmitigated. To protect this future house from bushfires an asset protection zone must be established. Because the trees are  
25 necessary to provide the screening of the turbines we feel that it would be a choice between the rock and a hard place. Should we accept the fire risk or retain the trees for visual, noise and shadow flicker screening? Or should we remove the trees to increase the fire break and wear the impacts of the turbine for two decades?

30 We are asking the Commissioners to remove turbines 66 to 70 to protect our property, our quality of life, our sleep, our amenity and the experience of arriving at the property. Thank you.

35 **MS SYKES:** Svetlana, I am just wondering before you leave, I just wondered, will you be providing your notes as a written submission?

**MS VLASOFF:** Sorry, what was that?

40 **MS SYKES:** Will you be providing your notes today as a written submission?

**MS VLASOFF:** I can do, yes.

**MS SYKES:** And it may be helpful for the panel as well that you mentioned the  
45 DA.

**MS VLASOFF:** Okay.

**MS SYKES:** If you had any information related to that.

5 **MS VLASOFF:** The DA, the actual paperwork I sent to the Department of Planning. I only redacted our signatures because it was - it could be used for public display. And it shows that we have got a building envelope and it's very close to the boundary. And one of the turbines overlooks our valley very close to that area.

10 **MS SYKES:** Okay. Thank you. So you are very welcome to add any additional information as part of your submission.

**MS VLASOFF:** Yes. I intend to add a lot more. I have had an ordeal. Our car broke down, so I barely made it 15 minutes before I had to speak.

15 **MS SYKES:** Thank you very much.

**MS VLASOFF:** You just have to improvise. Thank you.

20 **MS SYKES:** I would like to welcome our next speaker, Robert Schofield.

**MR SCHOFIELD:** Thank you. Thank you, Commission, for giving me the opportunity to speak. My name is Robert Schofield and I have lived in Nundle for most of my life. I have also - was on the local Nundle Council here for 20 years and after the amalgamation I went to - I was one term on the Tamworth Regional Council.

25 I'm a fourth generation owner of the Peel Inn and have had that position for the last 57 years. In 2014 I received an OAM for service to the community. I have always been excited about the wind farm and the benefits it could bring to our local community groups. I number those at about 12 to 14. I'm sure with the regular income and many new volunteers, which could bring to our districts these organisations could enhance both activities and building for the benefit of the community.

35 I note in the draft conditions that the Community Enhancement Fund is now part of the voluntary planning agreement with Tamworth Regional Council. I would like to say that we as residents should have a larger say in how the community - how the community enhancement fund is spent as it was promised. On speaking to the council and listening to the councils and mayor I do not feel that they have the interest of the community at hand because of the way in which they have intended to take control of the Community Enhancement Fund. We have witnessed these broken promises before. This project could be a great opportunity for our community to build a better place to live in and bring some wealth to Nundle and new people and a new start. Thank you.

45 **MS SYKES:** Thank you very much. Did you have any questions?

**MR MARSHALL:** I just wonder with regard to the Community Enhancement Fund, do you have a -

5 **MR SCHOFIELD:** Yes, the Community Enhancement Fund, yes.

**MR MARSHALL:** Do you have a suggestions to make about how local control of that fund -

10 **MR SCHOFIELD:** I'm not sure about that, but I don't think that Tamworth Regional Council are the right people to be handling it. Because I don't think they've got the community at hand. They don't want this wind farm, and if it does happen to go I feel that they will be more of a hindrance than trying to get it off the ground. Try to give us this community enhancement. I do realise that someone has got to be looking after it, I'm not sure about that yet. But I just feel that the  
15 the council have lost interest in the community itself, they are - fair enough, they don't want the wind farm here. And that's fair, okay. That's good. But I don't think that after that that they should be given the chance to be handling the money.

20 **MR MARSHALL:** Okay. Thank you.

**MS SYKES:** Robert, we just had one more question.

**MR SCHOFIELD:** Yes.

25 **MS GRANT:** As custodian of the Peel Inn, I wonder previous speakers that we have come across over the last few days have mentioned concerns about impact on the heritage fabric of the inn and also the interrelationship with the sewage and septic system at the rear of the property. Just wondering if you are able to comment on what plans are afoot to understand that with the deviation road.  
30

**MR SCHOFIELD:** We have got plans afoot to try and do something with our septic system at Nundle. Once again, I have spoken to Tamworth Regional Council and they have not given me any help at all. But that has been there now for the last 50 - 60 years, the system which is in there now, and I don't think there's  
35 too much of a problem but that's just another thing that can pop up, make it harder for us. Thank you.

**MS GRANT:** Than you.

40 **MS SYKES:** So I would like to welcome our next speaker, Danielle Douglas.

**MS DOUGLAS:** Thank you. Have I got a presentation that I have sent? Some slides that I've sent through? Thank you. We can start with the first slide now.  
45 Thank you.

Hi, my name is Danielle Douglas and I'm speaking on behalf of my family and our family business run from the farm on the Crawney Road. Our property is NAD-22.

We are located close to the Crawney end of the project under 5 kilometres to the turbine on the western end. The impact of this project and our life will be huge. We will have the construction traffic, trucks, light vehicles coming within metres of our house, accessing the powerlines under construction. We also have concern  
5 about trespassing over our land in numerous places and in other areas where the construction trucks are very close to our boundary.

10 First slide. On this first slide we are looking at the recommended access option B. The access is in a tight space next to a very large dam and our property corner. We think that they may intrude onto our land to get away from the dam and the steep and boggy area. I'm asking the Commission to make it a condition of consent that the Applicant should survey our corner. We can call it corner A. Prior to the  
15 commence of construction also the Applicant puts up a fence 50 metres either side of the corner to make sure that they don't interfere with our boundary and to ensure that not an inch of our land is excavated during the construction process and enough soil is left on the corner of the fence to stand. We want to make sure that our land is not transversed upon the hundreds of vehicles and workers. Next slide, please.

20 At the front of our house we marked it as corner B1 and B2. This is where there's a possibility of trespass by the neighbour's driveway which is proposed to be used by the Applicant for accessing the wind farm power line. The use of this access point will have a huge impact on our dwelling with light and heavy vehicle passing our house in close proximity. We also need to make sure that no trees  
25 located on our private properties are cut, logged or damaged by the large truck accessing the power line. We don't know how well the old fence is aligned with the boundary. We are asking the Commission to make it a condition of consent that the Applicant survey these two corners. Additionally, we would like the Commission to impose the following condition in relation to the use of this  
30 driveway in front of our house: No construction traffic earlier than 8.30 or later than 3 pm; dust aspiration measures or sealing to be implemented before approval - before start of construction - to prevent dust from settling on our roof, sleeting up our gutters and rainwater tanks. Next slide, please.

35 Looking at the map provided by the Applicant it seemed they may need to enter our paddock at section C because the land on the other side of the fence is very steep. There is not much room for trucks which is why our neighbour enters across our paddock especially in the wet weather. Again we would like to make sure that the wind farm power line construction traffic does not transgress on our land. This  
40 is another section where we would like the Applicant to survey to make sure that any track constructed are not on our land. Next slide, please.

45 Right. This slide is about the Governor's Shelf and the visual impact. Those you can see are huge. From the veranda over the dining table we will be looking at multiple turbines, the big road proposed to build transport turbines components, and to the ridge, the substation, the massive battery bank, the large worksite shed and the consent production facility. This project already has another option for

substation. In the middle of the project far from Nundle public road and people's home. We would like for this optional substation location to be removed please. They would be restricting the regional location for this infrastructure. It will result in a reduced visual impact on us, less disturbance and lower biodiversity impact and reduce erosion risk. We also ask that the turbine numbers 6, 5, 4, 3 and 2 are removed to mitigate the visual impact on our property, please.

I think the Commission needs to investigate the constructability of the western conductor road very carefully and carry out risk assessment. Without a detailed engineering plan nobody knows the true impact that this has. This is also important to understand the visual impact. We don't know if the batters will be concealed, covered in rock. We don't know how big the batters will be, how wide the road itself needs to be. We are used to looking at a tree-lined ridge top. This will change. They raised the amount of compensation at the end of 2021 and that was the last time we have heard from them. They have raised the amount because obviously they recognise the significant impact this project is having on our property. We will not be accepting any compensation at any time for this infrastructure. We want this project to be not approved.

Next slide, please. This is the view from our veranda. We are looking straight at the substation between the two old fruit trees which are deciduous and won't provide any screening in winter and will not last the next 30 years. If you walk a few metres either side of the veranda or our house we see the whole ridge like the previous slide. Next slide, please. They have proposed to plant some vegetation downhill from the house, 8 to 10 metres from the veranda without any consultation from us. I don't think they are taking any fire risk into account.

A few other things I would like to address. We have not received any risk assessment communications since late 2021 - if I can, just a few sentences, thank you - regarding any part of the project. What about the substation on the Governor's Shelf with battery stored just upstream of our property? Ultimately we would like this project to be rejected. But in the worst case scenario we would like to have a condition that if no turbines are operational within five years the project should expire. We don't want to live forever with approved but not constructed ghost wind farm. Also, if you could please put a condition that they are not upgrading the turbine to a greater height at a later date.

I would like to note that the lack of professionalism, research, leadership and communication from that company for a project of that size with so much impact is unheard of. Where is all the risk assessments? Where is the research? Where is the evidence? I would like to ask a question to the Commission, please. If a turbine's life is 25 years, how many years are spent repaying the debt to the environment? How much of the natural environment do we have to destroy in order to save the planet? Thank you.

**MS SYKES:** Danielle, thank you very much for your submission and certainly the information you provided on the slides. It was very informative. I just wanted to

check, you were reading in some parts from notes prepared. Will they be submitted also to the website?

5 **MS DOUGLAS:** Yes, they will.

**MS SYKES:** Yes. Great. Thank you.

10 **MS DOUGLAS:** Not a problem. And you are more than welcome - ENGIE has never - haven't - other than the first year of coming to our place to take some photos, they have not consulted on three different locations, ask us to show them, or have any question or communication about how it will impact upon us. I think by the road being so close to the boundary and in their last submissions a few of them actually cross the fence, have not come and speak to us. I think that that's a little bit -

15 **MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, Danielle. So our next speaker is Graeme Watts.

20 **MR WATTS:** Good afternoon everyone, my name is Graeme Watts. I live in Crawney and there has been a term used to describe the people from Crawney with regards to this project. It's the forgotten people. We were actually a group of farmers in an area that for quite some time was simply forgotten. We weren't communicated to by the proponent about this project going forward, and in actual case I found out about the project, when I was mustering cattle, by a station hand  
25 that told me, "Hey Wattsy, there might be a wind turbine farm coming to us". After I received that information it then took 18 months for my wife to contact the proponent and visit them in Sydney to find out what was going on.

30 **MS SYKES:** Excuse me, sorry for a moment Graeme. I'm very sorry to interrupt you. Can I please just check the photographs that have been taken? If we could just withhold taking any photographs while we have got a speaker. We have just got a query on the photograph. Apologies to interrupt there, Graham. We are just moving the microphone just a little bit closer there.

35 **MR WATTS:** Ready to go?

**MS SYKES:** Thank you.

40 **MR WATTS:** Okay. And from that day onwards the lack of professionalism from the proponent for the continuing months and years through to the six years that we have been sort of battling this project continued to amaze us time and time again. So today I am sure we have covered a lot of topics that are quite familiar to everyone, I just want to talk about a few things. One process and then a couple of  
45 items related to the area I live in.

As a background, my wife and I decided to buy a property in this area because of the obvious reasons: tranquillity, beauty, quiet, you can get away from it. It's just

spectacular and quite pristine. And 15 years ago we bought a property and we now run a cattle operation in the sort of Crawney area at the southern end of the project. Needless to say, we have been identified as one of the, if not the most significantly visually impacted residences in the project. I would like to thank the  
5 Independent Planning Commission for coming to our property yesterday and actually giving context to the impact this project is going to have on our lives and my family. At the moment I wake up in the morning and I make a coffee and I see hills and mountains and wedge-tailed eagles and all the things that are wonderful. If this project goes ahead I will - I don't know, has anyone been to Las Vegas, seen  
10 the Las Vegas strip? At night I will see a Las Vegas strip and in the morning I will see approximately 30 turbines staring at me. Towards the southern end of that strip of turbines I will have six or eight of them that sit directly between that big yellow thing in the sky called the sun and my house, and my living room and my kitchen. The proponent tells me that, no, there won't be any flicker. But I'm pretty  
15 sure - and they haven't validated it - I'm pretty sure there is going to be some kind of impact in regards to flicker.

Across the front of my house there is glass. Glass for days. Because we bought our property and we built our house to capitalise on firstly view, secondly view,  
20 thirdly view; and I think you will see where we are going there. The views are the value of our property. The views are the value. And that's the thing that this project is going to take away from us. So the things I did want to talk about: (A) obviously the views and the impact that's going to have on us from a visual standpoint, but process. I'm pretty sure that there's some farmers and quite a few  
25 farmers and graziers in this room today and I think we all know what it's like to actually negotiate building a fence with our neighbours. It can be quite tricky at times. How you actually get it done is you break bread, you have genuous conversations, you spend time with people, you understand one another's needs and you collaboratively decide a way forward. Throughout this entire project I  
30 haven't experienced anything like that from the proponent for a project that is going to so significantly impact my personal and future lives of my children and family that it's almost laughable. I was waiting for the phone call that someone would come and sit with me and talk about the project and it simply didn't happen.

35 The process has been laughable all the way through. If they consider themselves to be a large conglomerate with a wealth of business experience and commercial acumen they failed in every account. So there's all of those things. The process simply lacked transparency, lacked accountability. It wasn't equal. I've had to do a lot of the work to help them to get the answers they needed for the project to go  
40 ahead. I almost feel the fool. They have taken advantage of us and made us their workforce to actually tell them how they could get their project to go ahead. Funnily enough, we had to do it in tight deadlines but they had as long as they wanted to get it done. So, look, well done guys; you've had a lend of us, you really have.

45

So the process in itself as reinforced by the Wind Commissioner when we had our session with them some weeks ago, clearly demonstrates that Australia as a

country is immature in being able to manage, arbitrate, orchestrate and carefully sort of deliver these projects back to the nation. And it has a long way to go to be an industry or a country that has just transition. Because at the moment it doesn't feel just at all. We feel as though we have been walked over the top of. There's a few points that my wife will elaborate on this afternoon just around screening and things like that, but, you know, I think for most of the farmers in the room I think we know that screening is going to be quite tricky to sort of veil 30-odd turbines that are 230 metres tall staring at you each morning. But we will talk about that in more detail later on.

10

**MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, Graeme. Did you have any questions? So our next speaker is Alena Lavrushkina. Alena. Apologies if I haven't pronounced your surname properly.

15

**MS LAVRUSHKINA:** I have a PowerPoint. Thank you. I think we can proceed to the next slide. So hi everyone, my name is Alena. My husband and I purchased a property on Morrisons Gap Road lot 13 which was excluded from the visual assessments. Our lot has a dwelling entitlement. We have an existing driveway. We have an excellent house site. I had alerted the Department as soon as I became aware of this issue hoping to be included, but a one sentence reply, "Thank you for your update to your situation". Sorry, I have messed this up. They have replied, "Thank you on the update of your situation, we will take this into consideration".

20

25

They didn't. They have inserted two sentences in the report at paragraph 111 where they have stated that the entire lot is outside the 2 kilometres and so therefore will be classed as VIZ2. I have emailed ENGIE and Someva multiple times, and I have texted Aref. I have asked for more data. I have asked for wire frame. We don't know how many turbines we will see or how intrusive they will be on the landscape. Our whole lot not counting that little skinny section there is between 2.3 and 2.7 kilometres from the project. And from the construction yard at the beginning of the site, at the site entry, it is only 1,600 metres.

30

The Department has previously requested additional information in relation to the lot's dwelling entitlements and the Applicant's supplied this information in March 2022. They have assessed 20 lots with dwelling entitlements wholly or partially within 3 kilometres of the wind farm and they have only excluded one lot which is ours. I have it in writing from the previous owners that the Applicant has been aware of our property since May 2020. So the exclusion is deliberate.

35

40

Next slide, please. This map is all I have. I know approximately where our block is and I can tell that is shaded orange and red. So we have a choice of high visual impact from the low part of the block or very high visual impact from the high part. In the second sentence of the bandaid measure the Department stated:

45

"The dwelling could be oriented with primary views away from the project."

We don't have views in any other direction. The view to the south-west is our only view. Every property in Morrisons Gap Road has views in the same direction towards the project. Our view is provided by the power line corridor clearing and the sloping terrain towards the wind farm. Next slide, please.

5

Hanging Rock is an incredible location with cool climate and lush vegetation as you have seen. Our block is the best one in the subdivision and the last undeveloped plot. We have the highest elevation, we have the best views to the Ben Halls Nature Reserve and the most amount of useful land - gently sloping towards the wind farm unfortunately. Hanging Rock is a very tight market with many properties changing hands privately within the circle of family or friends. The last time a lifestyle block on Morrisons Gap Road was listed on the open market eight years ago, and this particular block I have first tried to purchase three years ago. One has to be very patient to secure their little piece of paradise of Hanging Rock.

10  
15

Next slide, please. The view you have just seen was dismissed by the Department as insignificant because we are VIZ2. The vegetation screening is not a suitable measure within the power line corridor and the bushfire consultant advised that 45 metres asset protection zone to the west and south will be required. We have four turbines inside the black line and we might potentially see the rest of the project, the whole project. The last seven turbines in Morrisons Gap Road are the most impactful. They are the closest. The proposed removal of the 11 turbines further down Morrisons Gap Road actually benefits us. It relieves the visual impact somewhat. But the most immediate turbines remain. We are asking the Departments to remove turbines 64 to 70 to relieve visual impact to us and others.

20

25

Next slide, please. With the introduction of the new seven star rating energy efficiency the orientation of the house is hardly negotiable. In this subalpine climate we will be required to have unshaded windows on the northern side for solar gain which means the only suitable location for the all-weather undercover veranda is on the southern side where the views are and where the wind farm is. The constraints of the dwelling orientation have been communicated to the Applicant and to the Department and ignored by both. Next slide, please.

30

35

I just wanted to touch a little bit on the transport section. Next slide, please. We are not sure which way OSOM vehicles are coming. There are three seemingly opposing options, the Department's assessment report. Next slide, please. The fourth option offered by the Department is wire them up by remarking all components to proceed to Hanging Rock. Next slide, please. [REDACTED] most up to date assessment has its own version where he is proposing for general traffic, heavy vehicles, possibly hubs to proceed via Hanging Rock. Next one.

40

45

We have some clarity that the blades are coming down the Crawney Road but it is not clear what the rest of the components. Especially if the recommended instrument of consent is adopted as proposed.

**MS SYKES:** Just bear with us, we will have the slide.

5 **MS LAVRUSHKINA:** Yes. Next one. Yes. So the instrument of consent appears to be giving the Applicant an open licence to proceed as they please. Since the last project amendment and exhibition we believed that all OSOM vehicles were going down Crawney Road but the Barry Road and Morrisons Gap Road option is suddenly back on the table. So we don't understand how this is happening. The conversation is now about heavy vehicles with or without "lumped together and broken down into two groups by height". I'm asking the Commission to remove  
10 the option of large components proceeding down Morrisons Gap Road, anything that is oversize overmass should not proceed. The bi-directional movement of trucks should not be allowed. Next slide, please.

15 There are unspecified amounts of work proposed at Devils Elbow, at Barry Road and Morrisons Gap Road intersection and for the entirety of the Morrisons Gap Road. The bridge over Oakenville Creek and the cutting behind it were never addressed in the first place. The clearance at Devils Elbow only 25 metres but Morrisons Gap Road, the road intersection, is only 35 metres and the sweeping bends further down the road are 25 metres. Next slide, please.

20 This slide shows the encroachment on private land by bi-directional B-double movement. The encroachment will be more significant if the OSOM vehicles are permitted. The Department has recommended the use of this intersection without addressing trespass. We are the owners of the land being trespassed and we do not  
25 consent to any road widening on our intersection.

30 Next slide, please. This image speaks for itself. It's our land either side of the road. My family intends to stand our ground on the trespass issue to protect the character of Morrisons Gap Road. Next slide, please.

I would like to address this lay-by. I'm asking the Department to remove or relocate the lay-by which is located across the road from NAD-16. NAD-16 is non-associated property. They have chosen to reject the compensation and not accept the impacts, and the lay-by directly in front of their house is an impact. It's  
35 not fair. I will conclude my presentation here and I will provide the rest of my material via a written submission. But I would like to summarise that this project does not appear to have a feasible physical access or legal access to the ridge line to deliver components. It's a paper wind farm with a paper access, with many unaddressed, unresolved issues and it should be rejected. Thank you.

40 **MS SYKES:** Alena. Did you have any questions? We just have a question here from Commissioner Grant.

45 **MS GRANT:** Could you just clarify - maybe it was on your first earlier slide, where your house is and then are you proposing a second house when you were saying that orientation is not negotiable?

**MS LAVRUSHKINA:** So our block has got the main part and then the skinny tile. The skinny tile is where trespass is on the corner, the main part is where the house site is. And we are located roughly between NAD-16 and NAD-18. We have not been allocated a number. So I have seen the photo montages for  
5 NAD-18, a whole 340 metres further and 30 metres lower and it's dramatic. I don't have any visual of my property. I have asked and been none given.

**MS GRANT:** Okay. Thank you.

10 **MS SYKES:** Alena, also just to support with the transcript process for today's submission, would it be possible to - for you to provide to the Commission a copy of you speaking notes?

**MS LAVRUSHKINA:** Yes.  
15

**MS SYKES:** Thank you.

**MS LAVRUSHKINA:** Yes, I know, accent.

20 **MS SYKES:** Thank you. . Our next speaker is Bruce Moore. Ready to go.

**MR MOORE:** Thank you. Bruce Moore, I live in a - I am a sheep and cattle farmer and we have been in the Nundle area for several generations. We live 30 kilometres east of Nundle and look out on the Hills of Gold site to our west. So we  
25 are on as a couple of speakers ago are to the south and a little bit of a forgotten area, we are very much a forgotten area on the eastern side of the project. Because of our elevation where we live, 1,250 metres, we are in the red area according to the Hills of Gold mapping for visual impact of the proposed turbines. But that's said, upfront I also feel I need to say I have no financial interest or involvement,  
30 dealings with the Hills of Gold project or with the main proponent, Jimmy Robinson. I'm removed.

We live in an isolated area and it has never been viable to connect to the State electricity grid. So therefore we have always generated our own power needs  
35 relying on diesel generators until 16 years ago when we installed a wind turbine and then two years later we added a small array of solar panels. Now, the system involves a large bank of batteries, a computer controller and a diesel generator. So various forms of power supply. In 2023 the diesel generator was only required to run for six hours. That is virtually no fossil fuels usage, and on our farm there is  
40 two houses, multiple sheds, electric shearing shed and a bit of a - we are a family farm but there is eight fridges and freezers. So we are not backpacker 12-vault you know, campervan. We are not an aluminium smelter either. But we can - life is good with renewables.

45 Having lived in our renewable - having lived with our renewable energy system I see that it is real and possible to get the bulk of our power from renewables. Now I'm talking of the community rather than ourselves because we have achieved that

ourselves. The pleasure and satisfaction having our electrical needs supplied by the sun and the wind - and I put them together because on any of these projects, even coal on its own, is not viable long-term. The pleasure and satisfaction of having our electrical needs supplied by the sun and the wind that just passes us by  
5 each day otherwise is immense. Now, I know there's a lot of angst in the community on the other issues as spoken, but there is some pleasure and good feelings on the other side of the coin. The broader community just needs time and experience to acknowledge that renewables can and will supply a lot of our power in the future.

10 Increased employment and flow-on - increased vitality and prospects of the district, not just to Jenkins Street, is a major positive for the project but I don't really want to say much more, my main thought is the renewables. I see the Community Enhancement Fund as a secondary, albeit significant, side benefit. It's  
15 not a major driver for my interest.

My main reason for my enthusiasm for the Hills of Gold project is the long-term role it will play addressing climate change. For the last 100 years man has had a major impact on the world and the Hills of Gold project is a small cog in the effort  
20 to reduce fossil fuel usage. I have fought bushfires and done contract work along the Hills of Gold spur. I know it quite well. And especially to those who have not visited the site - especially so - make no mistake, it is a fantastic wind resource site. Wind resource, it's very strong. As a superior wind resource site the return on environmental costs of building the project is maximised. You don't build a dam in  
25 a dry gully, you build a dam where there is water flowing. The same thing with this wind turbine project.

Power for the community has been generated - has to be generated somewhere, and the Hills of Gold project site is a fantastic wind resource site. We all like and  
30 need electricity and so that requires infrastructure in somebody's backyard. Thank you.

**MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, Bruce. Did you have any questions? Thanks very much for your submission. I would now like to call Vladimir Vlasoff as our  
35 next speaker.

**MR VLASOFF:** Good afternoon, my name is Vladimir Vlasoff. I will be speaking on behalf of my family of lot 22 in Hanging Rock and also Hanging  
40 Rock Rural Fire Brigade. I will start off with the Hanging Rock Rural Fire Brigade. As a captain of our brigade the local brigade expressed the following comments in relation to the Hills of Gold Wind Farm proposal: In its current form the proposal could inhabit aerial firefighting operations in the vicinity of the towers. Smoke, wind and terrain could restrict the area of operations to the east, north, west of the wind farm. Our experience in the Hanging Rock district tells us  
45 that if fires have the opportunity to get established in the timber country surrounding the wind farm they are hard to control and can last several days, even weeks. The danger of such a fire becoming established becomes a significant risk

to the safety of Hanging Rock village and is likely to make the village undefendable. The location of the wind towers in one of the highest ridges in the Great Dividing Range north of Sydney will inhibit the safe operation of control and management activities of a fire in the vicinity of restricting the ability of helicopters to land, take off, access water without significant climb to the area of operation. The advantage of water availability at the top of the ridge for helicopter bucketing is that no climbing is required to deliver their load. The location of wind tower and battery close to the big dam Nycooma, the most reliable water source at the top of it, will mean that the dam will not be available for firefighting operations.

The location of wind towers, WP-45, 55, 56 and 57 will render the most suitable location on top of the ridge for a helipad and assembly point and fire control operations unsuitable for that purpose. It is noted that the SEARs required the proponent to consult with the local RFS brigade on bushfire matter. The only consultation was taken place is one telephone conversation with a Hanging Rock senior deputy captain.

The proposed sitting wind towers - sorry - with the traffic that will be hindered with the emergency vehicles needing to be going through, there is not going to be anywhere for the vehicles to get through with these trucks constantly going up and down during the construction period. So if there's any emergency there is not going to be any chance for anyone to get any help through there.

Now, I will start with my family. So the manager of lot 22 - this is just my submission. Sorry. The block is a lifestyle block, yet our needs and use for the land has been totally ignored. We have all been treated as if we do not exist. We want to leave our land as a legacy to our children, grandchildren, like it has been passed on to us. As well as those who will follow them so they will learn some bush skills, survival skills, appreciate the fauna and flora and preserving the natural environment, not how to destroy it.

I'm also concerned about the health effects of the project. Administrative Appeals Tribunal AAT has declared that the noise annoyance caused by wind turbine generated at low frequency noise and infrasound is a plausible pathway to disease. With 72 people using this property, at least, there are too many of us at risk of negative health problems due to this proposal. I'm also concerned about the increase of electromagnetic fields that even the EIS has identified as a detrimental health hazard and risk to our health.

The wind farm site contains our head of waters of the Peel with several low streams and springs located at high elevations. I'm concerned about the construction causing detriment effect to the property's natural water supply and its contamination and reduction. The best practices are not infallible and any risk of the water supply is too big a risk.

I'm concerned about the digging into our cavernous water table and pouring concrete to support these massive turbines. I'm also concerned about the huge amount of oil each turbine contains and potential risk of accidentally devastating our environment.

5

I'm concerned about the landscape and how it will be altered and the characteristics of the whole Hanging Rock village will be altered. I believe in the detriment, the construction alone caused massive damage and the destruction to the landscape and community. There is a complex of 80 caves in Timor which contain subterranean water systems which need to be taken into consideration in a hydraulic study. The main cavern is 5 kilometres from the project. The presence of these caves was not noted by WP and the owner of the camping ground was not aware of the project until last - well, only a few months ago.

10

15 Back to being part of the RFS. There is a concern considering that neighbouring properties are heavily wooded and have steep valleys and only have small private carriageways for access. So during the construction period if accesses are blocked there is not going to be any help for any people in those areas. And then that's about it. Thank you.

20

**MS SYKES:** Vladimir, before you leave we just had a question.

**MS GRANT:** Yes. So with your RFS hat on, how long have you been involved in that local RFS?

25

**MR VLASOFF:** Seven years.

**MS GRANT:** So we have had a few submissions that have mentioned the impact of - potential impact of aerial firefighting. Could you explain to me, I think what you were referring to before is the issue is the access to water. I'm assuming that either GPS data is available, so it's not the physical impact of flying into a turbine structure it's preventing you access to the water. Is that the -

30

**MR VLASOFF:** And also the different flight paths that are needed to attack certain fires, depending on the location of the fires. So - because it is so steep and so many valleys, and so many strategic points that need to be hit with water from certain angles, that could impact quite significantly on getting on top of these fires. Because in our district this is the worst place to have a fire in the Tamworth district. It's the second-worst place in New South Wales to have a fire.

40

**MS GRANT:** Because of the terrain?

**MR VLASOFF:** The terrain and how quick - how steep and how fast the fire can - so in a worst case scenario it could be from a small fire that starts 40 minutes to complete evacuation. So it is a very serious thing to be looking at that has been completely overlooked.

45

**MS GRANT:** And the construction of the transverse track I have understood potentially could provide an alternative emergency access route. Would that potentially be a benefit?

5 **MR VLASOFF:** It depends on where the location of the fires are. So most of our firefighting - we have got people that go out there and have a look and assess where the fires are. So we need eyes on the ground besides just radioing in. If we can't see where these fires are or being able to get GPS locations for aerial support, then we are just not going to be doing anything productive. So it's - yes, it's a quite  
10 hard one to sort of - and every fire is different.

**MS GRANT:** Thank you.

15 **MS SYKES:** Thank you very much. So our next speaker is John Krsulja who will be speaking on behalf of the Hills of Gold preservation Inc.

**MR KRSULJA:** I will just wait on that slide presentation.

20 **MS SYKES:** So I understand we are just going to switch the ordering around a bit. Thanks, John. So if Melissa Hadley is available to speak now, speaking on behalf of the Newcastle and Hunter Valley Speleological Society Inc.

25 **MS HADLEY:** Hi, I'm Melissa Hadley and I'm here today representing the Newcastle and Hunter Valley Speleological Society to strongly object to the proposed Hills of Gold Wind Farm. Our objections are grounded in deep concerns regarding the preservation of our region's caves, biodiversity and ecological integrity as outlined in our previous submissions.

30 First and foremost we must address the critical issues of the bat populations within the project area. The caves of Timor, Crawney Pass, Glenrock Station, Ellerston, Barrington and Barry are not just geological features they are sanctuaries of life for our numerous bat species. The proposed constructions of wind turbines along their migration paths and the foraging grounds of these bats pose an immediate threat to their survival.

35 The removal of just five turbines, as proposed, fails to adequately address the risks to the bat migration and foraging. The migration measures outlined in the proposed bat and bird adaptive management plan and the environmental impact statement are woefully insufficient, ignoring the complexity of bat ecology and the  
40 interconnectedness of the habitats.

45 The threat of the blade strikes further compounds our concerns. Studies from Victoria, Tasmania, the USA and the UK all highlight the devastating impact of wind farms on bat populations, irrespective of their foraging behaviours or the proximity to the ground. The proposed EIS fails to accurately predict bat fatalities undermining the credibility of the entire assessment process. The studies have shown that the bat activities around turbines significantly increase after

construction, possibly due to unforeseen factors such as the air vibration or the high frequency sounds emitted by the turbines. Moreover, the research indicates that many of the bat fatalities occur without direct blade strikes. As the spinning blades create air-pressure changes that can fatally damage bats internal organs leading to deaths undetected by the traditional ground surveys.

It is imperative to highlight a critical issue regarding the data used to assess the bat populations within the project area. These assessments fail to capture the full extent of the biodiversity in the region as evident by the documentation of only eight out of the confirmed 12 bat species that have been documented in the Timor caves book. This glaring omission undermines the credibility of the entire assessment process and raises serious doubts about the accuracy and the proposed mitigation measures. In appendix F of the amendment report, November 2022, there is correspondence with Suzanne White that suggests cave and bat information was sought for the Tamworth area. However, it seems the request did not specifically request caves in the Upper Hunter Valley, so it was omitting areas like Crawney Pass, Glenrock, Ellerston, Barrington and Barry. Hence only the contact details for the Kempsey Speleological Society were providing - omitting my club's essential role as custodians of the documented cave systems for the Hunter Valley. This oversight is significant given the Kempsey Speleological Society primarily oversees the Kempsey cave systems amongst others and not the Hunter Valley.

The reliance on the outdated information, such as the 1985 Australian Karst Index referenced in their correspondence, and you can see it is still influencing documentation as late as May in 2023, as seen in the bat cave list on the table 49 of attachment F.5 revised BDAR, and likely the bat survey. Now, this source fails to reflect our ongoing discoveries. For instance, the karst index notes 23 caves at Timor, four containing bats. Only two have been included in the correspondence and the table. But we now know of 89 documented caves, 80 of which have been documented in this book. There is additional 244 caves that have been documented since the printing of the karst index within the region proposed for the wind farm. The source lacks updated information, highlighting the risk of relying on outdated data for critical decisions in the environmental conservation and land management.

Furthermore, the discrepancies between historical data and current observations within the club trips, and articles published in the Newcaves Chronicles highlight the need for urgent and comprehensive and up-to-date assessment of the bat population in the cave ecosystem. Relying on outdated information undermines the accuracy of the proposed plans and studies, endangering our ecosystems. As custodians of the land we are morally obliged to base environmental decisions on the best available science and data.

The potential impact on raptors, especially the wedge-tailed eagle is concerning, and they frequent the proposed site. Placing wind turbines atop the Crawney cliff sites intersects with their foraging routes for these majestic birds posing a

significant threat to their survival. Additionally, the proposed wind farm proposes a significant risk to the vulnerable flora and fauna, including the koalas, the spotted-tailed quoll and the greater glider. Habitat destruction and ecosystem fragmentation will irreversibly alter our natural heritage's delicate balance. Thank  
5 you for your time.

**MS SYKES:** We have just got a question. Thanks, Melissa.

10 **MR MARSHALL:** I would hope that you are going to perhaps provide a written submission to the inquiry and fill out more details, and in particular about the issue of up-to-date evidence. But also it would be very interesting if you could include the references to I think both the national and international experience with impacts on bats caused by wind farms. That would be helpful to see.

15 **MS HADLEY:** Yes.

**MS SYKES:** I just had one question. Just a clarification, you mentioned The risk around fatality to air vibration. Could you just explain that a little bit more?

20 **MS HADLEY:** It's going to - like there's a research paper on it that sort of went a little bit over my head. But basically when they went in the paper they got their own sort of - looked at a whole lot of bats that were in the vicinity of actual wind turbines, I think it was over in the US or the UK. And the bats that didn't  
25 have - weren't physically - they didn't look like they had been hit by the turbines, when they sort of dissected them they could still see there were physical damage to the internal organs and they couldn't attribute to anything else in their environment. So there's a very strong idea, like correlation with - that it's related to the turbines because they don't see it in any other spaces.

30 **MS SYKES:** Thank you very much. Okay. Our next speaker is Timothy Vlasoff.

**MR VLASOFF:** A bit stressful up here. Good morning Chairman, members of the committee and everyone gathered here today. My name is Timothy Vlasoff my  
35 parents own one the neighbouring properties of the project area on Shearers Road. Just for simplicity it is NAD-4C. We have owned this property and resided there for the better part of 40 years. My parents ran their market business from there and supplied fruit and vegetables to not only Nundle but the surrounding areas.

40 I stand before you today to object to the Hills of Gold Wind Farm and implore you to consider the impact these turbines will have on our landscape, biodiversity, our roads and access ways, and the hazards and risks it will create. And, more importantly, the impact to water supply.

45 I will start off by saying the project is out of character for this area. We live in a community filled with lifestyle, property owners and retirees who moved here to avoid urban environments and to enjoy unobstructed views of the native flora and fauna which we have grown up and become accustomed to. Minimal consideration

has been made towards ensuring we preserve the natural beauty and ecology of this area which is known to have animals such as koalas, spotted quolls, wombats and wedge-tailed eagles just to name a few. They say their plan is to - with the wombats is to excavate and relocate, but no consideration was given to wombats being territorial and relocations will not be successful.

Our family was asked to have a biodiversity assessment completed on our property to offset the destruction this project will cause. Most of our land has remained in its natural state and I fail to see how locking up with paper contracts can create additional biodiversity on top of what is already there or to offset the clearing for construction. The documentation supplied by the Applicant, it seems they are going to construct tracks on Morrisons Gap Road required for the installation of the wind turbines across the existing public road. They will also dig trenches across the road to put down electrical cables running between turbines. We don't know how long and how often the road will be closed for this construction. This information has not been supplied.

The Applicant said they will issue residences of Morrisons Gap and Shearers Road with handheld radios so we can communicate our travel plans to the site manager. We will basically need to ask permission to travel to and from our properties and through the compound designated at AD4. Does this mean they can limit us access down the road? Sorry, down the only public road to our property? What happens if the trip is urgent where we have not been given permission to go down, they have a trench open across the road or a wide load is coming down Morrisons Gap Road? What if there is a medical emergency and paramedics can't get in?

If the turbines are built we will have to access our property by driving under turbine number 70 and in close proximity to turbine 66 through 69. All these turbines are within the ice road distance from the road. Hanging Rock gets temperatures of zero, subzero temperatures at night from the end of April all the way through to October and there are many days during the winter when it stays around zero all day. We get a few snow events every year too which is always nice. I don't want to have an icicle coming through my windscreen as I drive home; that's the last thing I want. I also wish to note the first kilometre of Morrisons Gap Road entering the project area is marked as development and internal roads. Am I led to believe that we will be required to share the only access road with construction machinery and project-specific cars and trucks? This section of the project needs to be removed.

Hazards. Looking at bushfire, my insurance reminds me every year that I'm in a bushfire-prone zone. So I believe the bushfire-prone zone - yet this project will impact the ability of aerial water bombing; access to firefighting resources; and lastly the possibility that these turbines may cause some of the fires in densely vegetated areas, particularly blocking our only access out of the property. In many cases they propose to mitigate the visual impact to nearby properties by reliance on existing trees or additional tree plantings close to people's homes. This is not

acceptable. It puts people at risk of fire and takes away the ability to improve their safety in the climate as it heats up.

5 Now lastly the water supply. The Applicant and the project boast the positive  
impacts it will have on the community and ecology - sorry, economy. These  
benefits are temporary at best and there will be certain tourism-focused businesses  
and members of the community who will experience negative impacts. The  
10 balance of the benefit versus disbenefit was never looked at. It was stated this  
project will create in excess of 600 FTE as a direct result of this impact during the  
construction phase and drop down to 76 FTE during operational stages. It is  
doubtful that any locally based jobs will be created. Based on the experience of  
other wind farms, the workforce is drive-in and drive-out and contributes little to  
the economy. Or local employment, I mean. Other possible benefits stated were  
15 the increased tourism value which is yet to be substantiated. There is no proof that  
wind farms generate any meaningful tourism benefits anywhere in the world.

Moving to my last topic, water supply and access to water. It is worth noting our  
property has access to pristine waters of the Barnard river, fed by the groundwater  
and numerous springs originating on the site of the proposed wind farm. The  
20 Applicant identified that approximately 55 megalitres of water is required for the  
project but after years in development they have still not identified where the  
water will come from. We fear that it will be sourced on sight. A project such as  
this would or could create severe impacts to the water supply of the area and effect  
the livelihood of adjoining neighbours especially downstream, which we are. The  
25 SEARs requires applicant has to identify how much water they will need and  
where they will get it from. They have not identified sources of water apart from  
throwing a few guesses on the table. How is it possible that this project is  
recommended for approval without this information?

30 Now, overall approval of such a project will destroy the amenity of a small town  
that has already resulted in a fractured community and should be rejected. No  
questions?

35 **MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, Timothy. Did you have any questions. Thank  
you. Our next speaker is Judy Coates speaking on behalf of Tamworth Regional  
Council. Apologies, I just realised we are taking a five minute break. We will just  
have a five minute break. Thank you everyone.

40 <**THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 2.42 PM**

< **THE MEETING RESUMED AT 3.07 PM**

45 **MS SYKES:** Good afternoon everyone we are now moving into the afternoon  
session. I would just like to welcome our next speaker, John Krsulja who is  
speaking on behalf of Hills of Gold Preservation Inc.

**MR KRSULJA:** Thank you. Slide. I'm here to represent the Hills of Gold Preservation. For almost six years the Hills of Gold Preservation Inc has given residents and landholders a collective voice with Local, State and Federal Government in opposing ENGIE's proposed Hills of Gold Wind Farm. Can I just commend all our members for their speaking today on such a hard situation. To get up here and to speak so passionately about something that means so much to you. So well done. Well done to all the speakers.

Over to the left there is a pile of books there, and what they are is from the original EIS they are objections and support. And our members and others, the big pile is the objections, the small one is the support. The quality of objections is again to be commended. Slide.

I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land that we meet today, the Kamilaroi people, and I pay my respects to any Elders past and present. This development site or proposal of this site is like no other proposal in New South Wales. The development boundary encloses a watershed off the magnificent ridge line that separates three indigenous nations, three councils, and is the beginning of three major river systems. Slide.

There are many information gaps and risks, and basically the Department of Planning has given the Applicant an open licence to alter the transport route on key Nundle and Hanging Rock roads and within the project area. There are information gaps on access permission, bridge replacement, road constructions and modifications from the Nundle bridge and behind the pub to Jenkins Street, Crawney Road, the west connector road, transverse track, Morrison Gap Road, Barry Road and Old Hanging Rock road. Our members are concerned about the risk to the environment in underestimated land clearing, habitat loss and biodiversity. And after six years of development and assessment the largest utility in the world, ENGIE, and the Department of Planning continue to present a poorly sited project with important omissions. Even the Biodiversity Conservation and Science Directorate raises concerns about the proposed access tracks, the terrain and the narrow width. Slide.

Change of character. This comment is from the O'Hanlon Independent Visual Assessment Review:

"The proposed change will be critical to the ongoing community perception of the value of the surrounding landscape. The effect of this significant change of character should be carefully considered in the evaluation of the overall project's suitability and determination of development consent."

Slide. The development footprint is over 447 hectares, 48 kilometres of new internal access tracks, 28 kilometres of overhead transmission lines, 90 kilometres of underground transmission lines, disturbance to streetscape, potential house demolition, and doesn't protect the character of Nundle and Hanging Rock. Slide.

- 5 To dominate or not to dominate the landscape. The Department acknowledges that developing a wind farm with the recommended reduction in turbines, example 47 turbines, and associated infrastructure would be still visibly apparent. However, this layout would meet the objectives and it would not dominate the existing visual catchment. Our members strongly disagree with that statement. Slide.
- 10 This is the ridge line in its natural state and it's the backdrop to what is known within the Tamworth region as the jewel of the crown. It can be seen from Tamworth and surrounds, including the 60 kilometre drive to Nundle. See, you don't drive through Nundle, you drive to Nundle. Slide.
- 15 The developers continue to mention their proposal is 8 kilometres from the village of Nundle. But considering the Nundle village, surrounding businesses and agricultural farms that sit in the valley sit at a height of around 600 to 650 metres, the visual impact of 230 metre turbines on top of a ridge line surrounding the valleys at heights ranging from 1,000 to 1,400 metres above sea level will place them in a dominant position from every visual location. This is the main street of Nundle. Slide.
- 20 Transport. One hundred and forty one light and heavy vehicle movements daily for two years, up to six 91-metre oversized, overmass vehicles transporting blades for nine months. Construction to be 6.5 days a week with a massive impact on visitation and tourism to the Nundle surrounds. Also to the local community and services travelling between Nundle and Tamworth and Nundle and Tamworth.
- 25 Slide.
- 30 For the first time the development consent authorises Oakenville Street, Old Hanging Rock Road, Barry Road and Morrisons Gap Road for heavy traffic up to 5.9 metres high and 1.1 tonnes. The Commission, we ask, must not authorise the use of Barry Road and Morrisons Gap for oversized, overmass vehicles or heavy vehicles requiring escort.
- 35 As you can see, this is the road. Your access road. And someone mentioned before the longevity of winter and the heavy rainfalls that come in summer and spring. Slide. This tree, this photo, was taken with us alongside Morrisons Gap Road, the proposed transport route. The clearing of the roadside vegetation includes ribbon gum, mountain gum and snow gum. No detail is provided about the extent of roadside vegetation clearing on this road. Slide.
- 40 Morrisons Gap Road. Turbines, construction yard, underground cabling, internal access tracks and earthworks within 80 to 300 metres of Morrisons Gap Road Reserve. We request the removals of turbines 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69 and 70 next to Morrisons Gap Road. Slide.
- 45 No evidence of access. Site access option B via Crawney Road has no indigenous land use agreement that we are aware of with native title claimants, Nungaroo Local Aboriginal Land Council. Traversing Crown land. There is no design or

engineering of a Wombramurra Creek bridge, no biodiversity assessments of Wombramurra Creek. We request the biodiversity and Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment reports from recommended access B on Crawney Road, the waterway crossing and Wombramurra Creek. Slide.

5

The western connector road excluded from biodiversity, constructability advice and photo montages is located within steep terrain with no evidence blades can be delivered. We request a biodiversity assessment report on the western connector road on top of the range. Slide.

10

Steep topography. Thirty three per cent of all access tracks, excluding the western connector, are steeper than 20 per cent with high erosion risk. 17 per cent or 5 kilometres of all access track, excluding the western connector, are located in areas where existing terrain is steeper than 30 per cent with very high erosion risk. They say the water and erosion risk won't be addressed until a detailed design and construction phase. Which is not good enough. This slide shows cut-and-fill example of similar terrain to what we have here on our steepness. That cut and fill will scar the mountains beyond the life of the wind farm for hundreds of years if not thousands. Slide.

20

Flood flows. It's not addressed for the proposed private road on the Peel Inn curtilage on the flood plain. The potential compaction to carry those oversize, overmass vehicles and the redirection of flood flow on to public roads and reserves and private land. Also the change in elevation from Oakenville-Herring Street north to Innes Street-Jenkins Street. Temporary but reinstated as needed. Slide.

25

We support the Department's recommendation for the removal of 14 turbines: 9, 10, 11, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62 and 63 that do not comply with visual and noise guidelines. We do not support the Applicant's request for voluntary land acquisition or reinstatement of these turbines. The Applicant sites a case law not like-for-like with the Hills of Gold Wind Farm. Slide.

30

Biodiversity. We support the recommendation for the removal of turbines 24, 28 and 42 that reduce biodiversity impacts. We also support the BCS request for prioritising removal of moderate risk turbines unable to be relocated. We request the removal of turbines 39, 40, 43 and 45 to comply with 130 the metre buffer from the survey boundary of Ben Halls Gap Nature Reserve and 50 metre buffer from the existing native vegetation canopy. Slide.

40

Hills of Gold Wind Farm has already been rejected by the New South Wales Government once by being excluded by the - from the REZ zone and an area that prioritises minimising perceived interaction with national parks and meeting maximum capital costs for renewals. Slide.

45

Conclusion. The Hills of Gold Preservation Inc members request rejection of the Hills of Gold Wind Farm due to unacceptable risk to the environment and no evidence of access to the project area. Thank you.

5 **MS SYKES:** Thank you. We've just got one question here.

**MR MARSHALL:** I just want a point of clarification. You used a number of images of Nundle and surrounds with montages of the turbines. I just wanted to clarify whether they were drawn from the Applicant's material or were they  
10 generated by your own resources?

**MR KRSULJA:** Were they from the Applicants?

**UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** No, they were from - they were from the photo  
15 montages that were provided by ENGIE.

**MR KRSULJA:** Okay. They are from ENGIE's - the Applicants.  
Thank you.

**MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, John. Our next speaker is Judy Coates,  
20 Deputy Mayor Tamworth Regional Council.

**MS COATES:** Good afternoon everyone. My name is Judy Coates and I'm the Deputy Mayor of Tamworth Regional Council. Thank you for allowing me to comment and present on the Hills of Gold Wind Farm project. I'm not an engineer,  
25 a planner or a developer. I'm an average person who is an elected representative of Tamworth local government area, which encompasses the picturesque area of Nundle and Hanging Rock. As such, I'm not qualified to make technical comments or provide clarification around the technical aspects of the submission; I will leave that to the experts. But I am qualified, I believe, to ask questions.

30 I may also repeat some things that have been said previously, but I make no apology as I believe it only reinforces the concerns that exist around this. To me the "hills of gold", the name relates not just to the gold history of Nundle, but also to the colour of the surrounding hills during the different times of day and in  
35 different seasons. The ridge line where this project will sit is in a unique part of the Great Dividing Range, that is the origin of three river systems. The Peel River to the west, the Isis River feeding into the Hunter River in the south and the Barnard River to the east. For me there is potential to impact water quality at its source, particularly during the construction phase. Slide, please.

40 After reading the technical reports provided and questions posed by our Tamworth Regional Council staff, even as a lay person I can see various issues around the roads and access for many parts of the proposed development. There are so many unanswered questions: How much more land clearing will be required? What will  
45 be the impact on native flora and fauna? What will be the potential loss of indigenous artefacts? What will be the ongoing cost to Tamworth Regional Council and the entire community? And what will be the visual amenity impact?

Then speaking about Nundle village you have got removal of the vegetation, an industrial-style bypass, potential damage to heritage buildings close to the bypass and loss of the heritage attraction. What will be the impact of this temporary  
5 bypass on flooding and associated water environment and ecology? Because it can't be temporary when ENGIE speak of removing and reinstating as needed. Slide, please.

10 Visual amenity is multi-dimensional. It changes as one moves through the environment and will be different from the lookouts, the ridges, the lowlands from one house to another. There is a dramatic natural landscape in this area which provides a beautiful backdrop to the historic village and surrounding areas. It is a significant part of the visitor attraction. Notwithstanding the actual infrastructure, the turbines, their transmission lines and the swathes of associated bare land, what  
15 will the surrounding landscape look like after it has been scoured by roads widened and adapted to allow larger-than-life hardware for the project to be transported along them? The scars will be permanent. The visual impact, although lessened by the amendments, will still be significant and impact liveability and tourism. Slide.

20 This project expounds itself to be economically and environmentally beneficial, yet the price is ecological and biodiversity destruction and loss of community cohesion. Biodiversity offsets bought, applied, retired, applied elsewhere - however it's called - do little to mitigate the real environmental  
25 impacts. They appease through legislation, which I find quite condescending, demeaning and spurious. The threats and impacts for the flora and fauna are real with this project. These threatened species exist here because of the unique location and symbiotic relationships they have to one another. No amount of offsets are going to protect them or replace them.

30 Were you all aware that a rare plant *Euphrasia Arguta* was rediscovered in the Nundle State Forest in 2008 after being presumed extinct from since 1904? We were all aware - slide - we are all aware of the importance of replacing fossil fuels for the future of our planet and the government and its departments provide  
35 mandates and rhetoric to this effect. Communities must be consulted, least environmental impact, building the right places, complement land use. We speak about the public interest, the welfare or the wellbeing of the public. If considering this as a central concept, we could well say this project is in the public interest. But this is not just about people, it is also about the environment, its beauty, its  
40 biodiversity, its fragility and its future. Just let's consider a similar scenario in a similar landscape but a more populated place that is visited by more people. Would the outcry be louder? Would the pushback be greater? Would the outcome be better for the environment? Regardless of where it is, the environment deserves the same level of consideration and respect. I have one more slide.

45 This has been a protracted, emotional and time-consuming project application. After six long years there are still unanswered questions and a fractured

community. The future, this is unknown. The decision process is incomplete. The practicalities of the project - if the project progresses - are unknown. Repairs, maintenance, replacement, decommissioning. I ask again, as I've done throughout my presentation, what will be the irreversible impacts on flora, fauna, the land, the heritage, the biodiversity, the people should it go ahead. And the present. Sometimes just occasionally we have to be prepared to stand up for those unique places in our country that offer the beauty, heritage and unique biodiversity that is Nundle and the hills of gold. I believe this is one of those times. The present we are in. The one and only opportunity we will have to be the voice of reason to support and protect this special location. To make a loud outcry for a better outcome. Thank you.

**MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, Judy. I would now like to welcome Steve Brake from Tamworth Regional Council.

**MR BRAKE:** I'm Steve Brake, I am the Manager of Development Engineering with Tamworth Regional Council. As you're aware, Council is an objector to this project. My job, however, is to make sure that if the project does proceed that it proceeds in an orderly manner and Council's assets and therefore the community and the services that we provide to the community remain intact and provide a level of service that's acceptable. It's a difficult position to be in because it would appear that we are tacitly agreeing, but pragmatically we need to go down this pathway.

I have spoken at length previously and I appreciate the opportunity to speak again (audio dropped) and Council staff have spoken about our opinion that this project is not yet ready to be looked at as an approvable project. I won't go down that path, I will talk about the conditions and whether I think they are workable. I will just take a snapshot. We will provide a full tabulated response to the conditions with our interpretation of how if the project is to proceed they should work.

The first one is around general transport and traffic. And the question has to be asked, is Barry Road and Morrisons Gap Road going to be part of the OSOM route or not? So if we look back at the documentation that supports the recommended conditions, that documentation primarily consists of the assessment report prepared by the Department and the associated graphics that are appended to the draft conditions. So the assessment report talks about Barry Road and Morrisons Gap Road being limited to heavy traffic and that all OSOM traffic will be taken along the selected Crawney Path route. The figure in the back of the proposed conditions, which would be - I will have to look up the figure for you - nominates the same. Basically says that Barry Road and Morrisons Gap Road are exclusively for what is defined as heavy vehicles. So that's routine semitrailers and vehicles that don't need escorts; vehicles that aren't oversize or overmass. However, the condition that's attached to that figure, which is condition B30, would allow everything other than the turbine blades to go up that route. So I'm unclear what we are assessing and commenting on.

The next condition that talks to traffic is condition B32 and table 7.2. Okay. So condition 32 and its associated table 7.2 provide a list of all of the upgrades that are going to be required on the selected access route. For the last 12 months, and on at least two occasions, we have made comment on table 7.2 which was  
5 originally composed by the Applicant and then repeated by the Department that there are significant structures - especially on Lindsays Gap Road - missing from that tabulation. So we are talking there at least about the Sandy Creek Crossing, and then in addition all of the other associated minor structures that would go with any road widening and need to be upgraded as well. But that request has been so  
10 far overlooked.

I think it's important to recognise that one of the guiding principles in resolving any disputes, and therefore in framing any conditions, needs to be that if you expressly say something it's complete, and if you expressly say something and it  
15 omits a certain element then that element is not included. And that's the way the courts would determine such a matter. So it's quite important that any tabulation like this that gets put into a condition is complete or has a qualification along the lines of, "and any other associated structures." So we will certainly be recommending that because we don't want to be left in a - should the project  
20 proceed - in an unworkable position.

Condition B33 talks about road maintenance and the mechanisms by which we would agree what the pre-existing condition of the road is and what it should be returned to upon completion of the establishment phase of the project. We would  
25 like to see in there included some specifics around the technology that we would use. So Council would on a length of road like that use a laser profiling technology and we would like to see that echoed in the conditions so that we are not arguing about how we should assess that. That condition talks about rolling maintenance and a return at the end of the project to have the roads put back to the way they were as a minimum. It talks also about ongoing maintenance. Council  
30 has got some concerns at an engineering level about the possibility of a catastrophic-type failure that can't really be covered off just by a blanket reconstruction later on. It's possible that, you know, heavy overloads are going to either damage structures or push pavements on soft subgrades to the point that  
35 they are no longer viable to routine traffic. And these are public roadways we are talking about.

The assessments are all based on loads of up to 170 tonnes, which is based on the nacelles and some of the other components that go into the turbines, the project, if  
40 it's like any power generation project, is also going to have transformers and those types of equipment that are sort of ancillary to the generation, they can be quite heavy. So the sapphire wind mine - wind farm, it was a similar size to this one, might be, and it had 290 MVA transformers. They can be up to 300 tonnes of load. The transformers themselves are sort of around 130 to 150 tonnes. And then the  
45 sorts of vehicles that are required to manoeuvre those things bring the whole thing up to 280, 300 tonnes. That needs be looked at, especially in the context of the

structures over which that sort of stuff would pass, and as far as I can tell from my reading of the information so far it's not there.

5 Condition B33 and others. We have had some legal advice on the wording around  
disputes being resolved by the Planning Secretary and around our rights within the  
Roads Act and other Acts that interrelate with that Act. The conditions in the  
opinion of our legal advice fail the two tests of certainty and finality, in that there's  
not enough detail to be certain as to where we are headed and therefore there has  
10 to be a dispute resolution mechanism there. That begs two questions: If we have to  
have such vague conditions, are we really at a point where the conditions and the  
constraints around this project have been considered enough. And if the answer is  
yes, well obviously those conditions are going to need to be redrafted and we will  
provide some legal advice around that as well.

15 That's me. I haven't used my allocated time. It's probably a good thing, because  
this is a fairly dry, unemotional type of presentation. Happy for questions or happy  
to sit down.

20 **MS SYKES:** Thank you, Steve. Duncan?

**MR MARSHALL:** Steve, thank you very much for that presentation and also for  
your time over several occasions in the last few days. I mean, I was wondering  
whether in the light of the last few days, and what you've seen, what you've heard  
as part of the inspections that have gone on, in addition to the matters that you've  
25 raised whether you might very briefly identify where you think the major, I guess,  
on-ground transport issues still lie with this project, if any?

**MR BRAKE:** Yes. So there are two aspects to the project from our perspective.  
One is the public infrastructure network. So that's the road network that Council  
30 looks after and that the public and the school buses and everyone else utilise. So  
from our perspective that's Lindsays Gap Road into town and then all of the road  
networks that have been discussed at length by some of the other speakers. There's  
nothing new in conditioning around that and making sure that the road assets, the  
stormwater assets that are associated with the roads - all of those physical boring  
35 engineering elements - it's been done a thousand times. You know, look,  
interfacing with a developer and making sure that we come to an agreement as  
how that's being managed. The other aspect of engineering is in interpreting how  
the changes to the landscape are going to manifest themselves given the  
engineering constraints that we are having to deal with. So all of the stuff through  
40 town, through Innes Street and Jenkins Street where trees need to be removed. I  
see my job as explaining to landscape architect people and heritage people what  
sort of vibration, what sort of clearing, what sort of timeline those impacts are  
going to need to be in place for. So the removal of the trees on Innes Street and  
Jenkins Street will need to be a long-term prospect because the proponent in the  
45 event that they need to get back to site need to reserve the right to come back  
through that same route that's been approved. And that approval is for 30 or 35

years. So one of my jobs is to explain that so that others can make value judgments. They are well outside my purview.

5 The other concerns I have is - and they have been mentioned in previous presentations - are some of the missing gaps in the information. So the project since my involvement has morphed, especially the transport route, several times. And it's quite hard - as I have outlined in the first point of my presentation - it's very hard to get a handle on where we are actually landing here. So it started off with blade lifting technology, no impact on difficult terrain. That was dismissed.  
10 And then we moved to moving up through the Devils Elbows and all of the - all of the ramifications of that. Originally it was going to be some modification to the Devils Elbows and then it was, well no we will bypass them all together and go straight up the escarpment with all of its implications. That was then taken off the table and we were out to Crawney. And the Crawney alignment and option B from  
15 Crawney Road up into the site hasn't been fully assessed. So there is no engineering and the proponent is arguing, well that should be a condition and we will assess it. You know, in a normal project you wouldn't assess that now, I would differ from that. I don't think I can do my job and advise people that are providing visual impact assessments or environmental impact assessments, or sediment and erosion control risk management - I don't think I can advise them because I don't know what's being proposed. I've been up there, it's a dramatic  
20 escarpment to take heavy equipment up, and I would like to see some engineering now. I would add, I've worked in private enterprise for most of my professional career, not as a regulator. It's a natural - it's a natural part of the process to want to push the detailed and sometimes expensive elements of investigation outwards, especially when you are rolling through different phases of securing finance, and you don't want to push any of that stuff too early in the project because you might be wasting your time. It's not my opinion in this case. I think there are some  
25 elements of this that really need to be looked at now to provide that certainty on some of those very, very difficult elements of the project.  
30

From the proponent's point of view and perhaps from the Department's point of view the core business here is generating power. So the elements I'm concerned about are peripheral to that, but I think they are quite important. And they are  
35 certainly some of the elements that the community will experience the impact of in terms of visuals and those sorts of things.

**MS SYKES:** Thank you, so we'll now move on to our next speaker, Mitchell Gillogly from Tamworth Regional Council. Mitchell is speaking on behalf of  
40 Andrew Spicer, who is unwell.

**MR GILLOGLY:** Hi, my name is Mitch Gillogly. I'm team leader of Strategic Planning at Tamworth Regional Council. Overall the Tamworth Council, we've been dealing with this project for over six years now, iteration after iteration. We  
45 got to the point now finally where there has been a recommendation to the IPC, which is good progress, but as I'll go through here, and as my colleagues will say, there's still some significant concerns that council have about this project overall.

5 In terms of the character of these places, you know the township of Nundle and the village of Hanging Rock are two of the most unique, picturesque and environmentally diverse settlements in the Tamworth region. The proposed wind farm development will have a significant impact on the very fabric of these communities, and as it's been stated before, it will forever change the character of these areas.

10 This development has been continually objected to by council throughout all the iterations of this project. Overall council's not opposed to renewable energy. You know, after all, moving to, you know, a decarbonising energy network is one of the key requirements to meet the government's net zero targets. However, you know, council continues to argue just because it's got great wind doesn't mean it's a good spot for a wind farm.

15 You know the site selection is key. It's a key requirement under the EP&A Act and it guides all development that happens in New South Wales. Council's Blueprint 100, which is our strategic document, includes initiatives to support development of renewable energy projects within the region and we've done that on many a times.

20 However, Council's Blueprint 100 document also forms the basis for land use planning in the Tamworth region and again it looks at things like site constraint, impacts on social, natural and built environments. Similar requirements to the EP&A Act and council does not consider the proposed development has satisfied these requirements.

25 In terms of the assessment process in terms of the assessment process, as been mentioned, it's been lengthy. After reiteration and reiteration, it's taken up a significant amount of council's time, and this is on top of the REZ and everything else being around us as well.

30 You know, from our perspective there's still several issues that are still unresolved. That comes back to the routes, as Steve touched on, with Morrison Gap Road and how that's actually going to work. You know, water resources, the biodiversity impacts which I'll touch on and the impact on the heritage as well.

35 In terms of the conditions of consent, you know, they're broad in nature, and this - this can be okay, but in an instance like this where there's still so many unresolved issues, it can lead to a distinct lack of certainty in the conditions, you know, particularly around the haulage routes, where, you know, there's a condition in there referring to the planning sector need to resolve the matter, when the consent authority actually is IPC. The micro-siting of turbines, not more than 100 metres from the coordinates. You know, in terms of the impacts that this will arise, if they have to move 100 metres that could be towards the nature reserve, it could be towards the road reserve where there's ice. Things like that provide uncertainty in conditions of consent.

As outlined in the assessment report this, site is located near the state designated REZ. The REZ offers a more suitable and accessible sites than the one proposed. The subject site is far more challenging based on topography, biodiversity and access to many of these sites.

The proposed wind farm represents a high-impact industrial development located within close proximity to a national significant community. Council argues that the potential serious and irreversible impacts on bat species remains a significant concern and therefore the application should be assessed on the basis of the precautionary principles.

Now, this is - because of the impact of the development is not fully understood then the decision-makers should err on the side of caution by not approving the development. Council is considering local planning provisions to address strategically important areas of high biodiversity, and in is a key requirement of our Blueprint 100 document.

Council acknowledges and supports the efforts by the Department to reduce the impacts by the removal of additional 17 turbines. However, Council does not consider the proposed condition by the proponent to consider a voluntary acquisition condition to offset the impact of some of these turbines that are proposing to be removed, to be in the best interests of the community or a good planning outcome.

In conclusion, the Tamworth Regional Council maintains its strong objection to the Hills of Gold Wind Farm and reiterates that the development fails the site suitability test and is not in the public interest. Thank you.

**MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, Mitchell. We just had one question from -

**MS GRANT:** So, you referred to the Blueprint 100 as the strategic planning framework for Tamworth. Does that cover suitable sites for renewable energy, wind farm-type projects? So presumably it looks at land use conflicts and land use capability, and you mentioned the bushfire restraints. Has your strategic planning gone so far as to identify potential opportunities for where these kind of - you know, a wind farm should be located?

**MR GILLOGLY:** That's in the process at the moment. So we're looking at introducing scenic protection areas into LEP which will protect, you know, hilltops and high areas there, to protect visual impacts and things from potential wind farms.

**MS GRANT:** Yes.

**MR GILLOGLY:** But it's also - it will be looking at soil assessments, things like that. Because obviously we're talking about a wind farm today. This would be

including solar farms and the like, battery storage units and things like that, but that's currently - that investigation is occurring literally at the very moment.

5 **MS GRANT:** So does the current LEP have scenic protection areas -

**MR GILLOGLY:** No.

**MS GRANT:** Not at all yet. Okay. Thank you.

10 **MS SYKES:** Thank you very much.

**MR GILLOGLY:** Thanks.

15 **MS SYKES:** Our next speaker is Clare James, Tamworth Regional Council.

**MS JAMES:** Madam Chair, I'd like to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land in which we are meeting today. I would also like to pay my respects to Elders past and present. I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Hills of Gold Wind Farm proposal in my capacity as Heritage Advisor to Tamworth Regional Council. Thank you.

25 Three critical issues present themselves with respect to the proposal's heritage impacts including First Nation's heritage, the threats to workings at the Black Snake Gold Mine, and impacts to the Nundle village itself.

30 Firstly, it's essential that comprehensive and early consultation is undertaken with First Nations people in the development of a management plan referred to in conditions of consent issued by the Department. Secondly, the proposed transport route within the Black Snake Gold Mine should be heavily regulated due to the unacceptable potential risk to the structural integrity of the mine workings.

35 Historical background to the mine is provided in the application. However, a number of salient points should be highlighted. The Black Snake Gold Mine is assessed to contain over 20, but likely many more locations of historical diggings. These workings include tunnels, shafts, landform works and plant locations distributed widely across the curtilage area.

40 However, no accurate survey to determine their location has ever been produced. The effect of roadworks for upgrades, vibration and heavy vehicle use poses serious questions as to whether underground workings could withstand these impacts. We know that it is one of the oldest surviving mines in the Nundle area. The 17 hectare site, the only listed mine within the region, which positions it as a major location within the Nundle goldfields to conserve workings, to conserve their context and to interpret them.

45 Under no circumstances should the workings be compromised or lost. There is no composite conservation management plan in place for the site and as such no data

or survey comprehensive condition assessment across the site is available. It is pre-emptive to make a determination which affects the site in the absence of this information, and its use for increased heavy industrial vehicular access is not recommended.

5

The initial heritage assessment submitted with the application for works identified a major direct impact of the proposed new road construction on the Black Snake Gold Mine workings. Subsequent geophysical investigations were undertaken picking up underground voids, which is informative, however, they were not definitive, and provides no certainty around the extent of locations which could be impacted. There also does not appear to have been an assessment or consideration for potential impacts within the broader context of the Nundle Goldfields which collectively have a high level of cultural significance. The broader cultural landscapes contains at least 10 other known mines.

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With reference to conditions of consent issued by the Department, it is of particular concern that the Black Snake Gold Mine site is not listed as an historical higher stage item to avoid in table 6.3, and it is essential that this should be corrected. To ensure long-term protection, a condition prohibiting any vehicular heavy usage - any heavy vehicular usage within the site is recommended.

20

The proposed transport route through the early goldrush mid-1880s Nundle township is the third key component of the proposal where heritage impacts of identified. Major concerns are raised as to irreversible heritage impacts on the setting of significant identified heritage items, urban spaces and the town layout. Longer term physical impact on buildings through vibration should not be risked at all due to industrial-scale vehicular use.

25

The submitted heritage impact assessment provides comment on blade swings, but this information does not align with council's engineering assessment identifying the substantial removal of contributory urban town-spoke elements including significant tree groups.

30

The necessary space required for the turbines to be transferred - transported on the preferred route through the village appear to not have been fully documented, with no identification of street-scape elements including small scale carriageways, tree avenues, specimen trees, which would require removal, and the widening of the road in the vicinity of the Nundle Shire offices, in particular, will have irreversible visual impacts. Thank you.

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**MS SYKES:** We just have a question here from Commissioner Marshall.

**MR MARSHALL:** Thank you for that. Just focusing on the Black Snake Gold Mine site, I mean, there's a defined boundary for that at the moment. One immediate question is whether that's an adequate boundary for the historic site, or whether, in fact, workings or features extending beyond, and whether that's known, but I was also thinking about the heavy vehicle impact, because at the

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moment I think there's no intention, or the proposal doesn't include impacts within the historic site, so it would be impacts arising outside. I mean, that road is used at the moment by heavy vehicles, logging trucks at least. I'm just wondering whether council is concerned about those impacts as well.

5

**MS JAMES:** The main impact - I think the main concern at this stage, as we understand, it's referred to as being upgraded so that there are going to be some road construction work. There are going to be bypasses. There is going to be the need for - for construction traffic as well as heavy vehicle use, which may be increased in terms of the capacity of those vehicles, so I'd - my concern, I guess, is it's - it's an unknown as to what impacts there are going to be as a result of those - that escalation in terms of the intensity of use and the nature of the vehicles that might be also increased in terms of their size.

10  
15 **MR MARSHALL:** I guess the first question that I asked about the known extent of the historic workings, I mean, are they all within the current -

**MS JAMES:** We simply don't know, and that's what really concerns me, that the - that there has not been any comprehensive survey work. As I mentioned, there hasn't been a conservation management plan leading to any sort of condition assessment of any workings that are identified, so my - my feeling is we're really flying blind in terms of the workings and the impacts because simply they haven't been quantified. We really don't know the detail of where they are.

20  
25 **MR MARSHALL:** And who is the owner or manager of the Black Snake Gold Mine? Is it in public ownership, or is it privately owned or -

**MS JAMES:** It's publicly owned as a - yeah, it is, as I understand, it's a Crown reserve, so it is publicly owned.

30

**MR MARSHALL:** So State Government?

**MS JAMES:** Yes, but - yeah, I would need to confer with my council colleagues as to whether there is a lease for council management over the site.

35

**MR MARSHALL:** Okay.

**MS SYKES:** Thank you very much.

40 **MS JAMES:** Thank you.

**MS SYKES:** Our next speaker is Gina Vereker from Tamworth Regional Council.

45 **MS VEREKER:** Good afternoon. My name it is Gina Vereker and I'm the Director of Liveable Communities with Tamworth Council. This afternoon I'd like to sum up council's objections to the proposal, by going back to basics. This is a

planning process that we're all going through and I thought it relevant to just touch on what planning is really about.

5 Planning is about managing land use and about managing the conflicts in land use, and the potential inconsistencies between land uses and trying to resolve those conflicts where possible, and that's what we've all been doing over this last six years in one form or another.

10 Unfortunately, sometimes the inconsistency and incompatibility between land uses isn't able to be resolved. There are always or can be issues which aren't able to be fixed, and the two land uses just don't fit with each other, and that's where we find ourselves now with the Hills of Gold and the Nundle township. They're just incompatible uses, and they can't both survive in an economic, environmental, or cultural way ongoing without negative impacts.

15 The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act helps us to assess these impacts and measure them in a number of ways, and firstly it establishes for us our LEP, so Tamworth LEP. The aims of the LEP I'd like to draw your attention to, because they are particularly significant in terms of the proposal, and I've mentioned just a couple: To protect and promote the use and development of land or arts and culture activity, and this is particularly relevant, noting Nundle is a recognised arts and culture hub; the conservation of natural and other resources, by protecting areas of significance, for nature conservation, as well as places and buildings of architectural and heritage impact.

25 Now, we've heard about the comment - just recently about comments in both of those areas where this project does not achieve those aims. Our LEP also wants to encourage equitable, orderly and economic development, which this proposal could be seen to achieve. However, it only occurs when you can safeguard the community's interests and residential amenity, and again that's where this project falls down, because whilst it might create some short-term economic development, it doesn't safeguard the interests of the Nundle and Hanging Rock community, nor their amenity.

35 The EP&A Act, also, as you'd be well aware, provides direction under section 4.15, and talks about matters of consideration, and whilst these have been touched on before, I'd just reinforce those that are most relevant: The environmental impacts on both the natural and built environment; the social and economic impacts in the locality. These have been mentioned by council officers previously, both today and on previous occasions, but again the development fails to, at this point in time, alleviate those adverse impacts.

45 Council has also touched on the suitability of the site, and I note in the proponent's submission their most - their preferred reason for saying that the site is suitable is about the wind. Now, we note that. However, there are plenty of wind farms that have either been approved or proposed for approval on less windy land, and that

factor alone doesn't outweigh the negative aspects of the site suitability, which again have been spoken about quite regularly today.

5 And finally the public interest. And in my - in my concept of understanding of our planning, it's all about the public interest, and whilst the Applicant again contends that public interest - the public interest test is met, because we're engaging in creating renewable energy and it will lead to reduced power prices, again, that's not everything about public interest.

10 The public interest in this is about the local community and the impacts that will be had on that community which will be forever. And so I'd just sum up by reiterating what previous speakers have said, that council does not support this application. It is not ready to be approved. Thank you.

15 **MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, Gina. We don't - we don't have any questions at this point. Our next speaker is Dennis Armstrong, who is representing Save Our Surroundings, SOS.

20 **MR ARMSTRONG:** May I start?

**MS SYKES:** Thank you. Thank you - thank you, Dennis, can you start.

25 **MR ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Thank you for the opportunity to address the commission. Save Our Surroundings, SOS for short, started research (audio distortion) in 2009. Our aim was to support rural, regional groups faced with a negative (audio distortion). We have appeared as expert witnesses in Federal Parliamentary hearings, in the proposed climate bill with Australia becoming a (audio distortion) superpower.

30 (Audio distortion) statements, made submissions on (audio distortion) often highlighting the (audio distortion) submission made by the complainants -

**MS SYKES:** Dennis, I'm not sure if you can hear me?

35 **MR ARMSTRONG:** Yes, I can hear you.

**MS SYKES:** Thank you. We might have to - it seems to be breaking up a little bit from our end. We're having some difficulty hearing you.

40 **MR ARMSTRONG:** Yes, I'll not sure what I can do about it.

**MS SYKES:** Dennis, if I could ask you to speak a little bit more slowly as you move through your submission, that would be much appreciated.

45 **MR ARMSTRONG:** Okay, I can certainly do that.

**MS SYKES:** Thank you.

**MR ARMSTRONG:** Right. I got to the point where we - we have analysed many solar, wind and battery environmental impact statements and made submissions on many of them, often highlighting the deficiencies, omissions, misleading and unsubstantiated claims made by proponents. We've taken the research and experiences learned from overseas, and as far as possible applied them to the proposed and actual installed industrial wind, solar and batteries projects in Australia thus far.

We now use the information from proponents, manufacturers, government sources and tested studies. In addition to developing a capacity equivalence measure we have recently assessed the materials requirements of several different electricity generating types. The Hills of Gold project has many adverse impacts, including on visual amenity, on changing landscape character, on disruption to community life, on loss of endangered species, and of potential health impacts, to state just a few.

Others, will, no doubt, raise those today and other matters with you today. However, this presentation will address three different issues, namely: Failure to respond to SOS issues; (2) replacement of Liddell closure to satisfy or justify its project; and (3) unsustainable material requirements.

Firstly, a failure to respond to SOS issues, the proponent failed to respond to the issues in our submission. In addition to the DP assessment report makes no mention of SOS as a submitter. We made a submission on 7 December 2022 during the exhibition period for the Hills of Gold wind project. We raised many issues covering 11 categories in our three-page submission. We hoped the Commissioners have read our submission. The proponent only included our name in appendix G of the EIS and did not include any of the issues we raised, did not respond to any of those issues in its RTS, did not even acknowledge that we objected to the project.

We believe this avoidance to be a breach of the SEARs requirement to respond to all issues and concerns raised by submitters. We raised this with the DPE plan. The response from the planner was that they will take our concerns into account in their assessment.

However, SOS are the submitters, and the general public are denied the opportunity to assess the proponent's responses that should have been made. More detail will be included in our written submission to the commission.

Two, replacement of Liddell closure to justify its project. I will now consider the proponent's justification for its project. All generator types produce the same standard product of alternating current electricity. There was not a direct comparison between similar generating types such as wind works, let along different generating types. The proponents stated on page 356 of the EIS as justification for its 420 megawatt project was to:

"Provide significant amount of new generation capacity which will be required when the 2,000 megawatt Liddell Power Station closes in 2023."

5 The 52-year-old Liddell Power Station closed fully in April 2023. At that time the capacity was 1,260 megawatts, the capacity factor of 54.4 per cent and an output of 6,000 gigawatt hours annually. The proponent provided no substantiation nor comparison for its claim. SOS did do a comparison in its submission and the Hills of Gold project compared very poorly on multiple measures.

10 Comparing individual electricity generating types is difficult. Since then, SOS has developed a simple method of comparing projects. SOS has developed the concept of capacity equivalence, which uses stated capacity, capacity factor and expected project life.

15 Our paper, Chinese Manufactured PV Solar Panels Increase Greenhouse Gas Emissions, was provided previously to the commission and includes detail of our capacity equivalence methodology. Applying this method using the Liddell capacity factor of 54.4 per cent and the life of 50 years the 420 megawatt Hills of Gold capacity equivalent is only 115 megawatts. Hardly the significant capacity replacement as claimed by the proponent of the 2,000 megawatt Liddell.

25 In other words, the Hills of Gold project would need to be 3.6 times larger at 1,528 megawatts to match just 420 megawatts of Liddell's capacity. Clearly this highlights the extravagant use of the Earth's resources and multiplies the increased negative aspects of the project. It also raised the issue of sustainability.

30 One aspect of sustainability is the quantity of materials required by different generating sources to project equivalent amounts of electricity over a given period. SOS has also recently developed a method of comparing the tonnes of materials used by different electricity generating types to produce the same output for the national energy market.

35 The methodology described in our paper, Wind and Solar Works Resource Requirements Aren't Sustainable - I assume the Commissioners have read our paper as we emailed it to the meeting organiser on 18 January. Unsustainable material requirements - unlike standalone projects often considered by the commission, such as lithium mine, residential skyscraper or a seaport expansion, the Hills of Gold - the Hills of Gold project is part of an electricity network. It should be evaluated not as a standalone project, but on how well it contributes to achieving the objectives of the electricity network, namely cheap reliable energy and significantly lowering greenhouse gas emissions. How efficient and effective will this project be in meeting these objectives, compared to, say, other wind or solar works projects?

45 The proponent was proposing to build over 60 of the largest structures in Australia. What do we get for this? How much material is required to generate the

5 same quantity of electricity as alternative generation sources? We have applied the methodology referred to previously to the Hills of Gold proposal using their information as obtained in their EIS of Vestas 6 megawatt turbine specification and a concrete base data from Bowmans Creek EIS. All electricity generating types sell the same standard product to the National Energy Market, namely alternating current electricity.

10 SOS is also able to assess for different electricity generator types how many types of materials per equivalent megawatt hour is required over, say, 60 years at a scale capacity for its generator type of 400 megawatts. A highly enlightening exercise.

15 In the case of the Hills of Gold project it would require 166,518 tonnes of materials for just 66 wind turbines and their reinforced concrete bases. This calculation excludes all other infrastructure such as batteries, transmission lines, roads, operating and maintenance materials and external back-up infrastructure. It also excludes the 31 per cent decline in efficiency over 25 years as provided by the Hills of Gold EIS case study. Despite these omissions the results are already conclusive. The total materials required for the Hills of Gold works for only the wind turbine and its reinforced concrete base over two lifetimes is \$1,0023,777  
20 tonnes. This is the materials required to match the electricity output of a fully operational heli-plant, high efficiency low emissions plant over 60 years. This is already 5.9 times more than the operating heli-plant and 13 times more than an average operating nuclear plant.

25 Compared to two other wind works proposals, the Hills of Gold project is 30 per cent more tonnes of materials than Bowmans Creek wind works, which is 785,396 tonnes and 20 per cent less than Winterbourne Wind Works which is 1,273,421 tonnes.

30 All three are substantially more than the other generating sources. Which of these wind works are most effective in meeting the electricity network objectives? Which should be rejected? Why such variation? Such variations are not assessed in the DPE assessment reports.

35 Although the arithmetic is relatively simple it is not appropriate to present the details verbally today. We will include the calculations and results of our SOS submission to the commission. However, we can conclude from just the partial analysis, that is turbines and concrete bases only, that the Hills of Gold project does not meet the sustainability requirement, especially as a requirement of very  
40 energy-intensive mining and processing of a greater variety of materials, including polymer materials, glass/carbon fibre composites, steel and iron, aluminium alloys, lubricants, copper, electronics, rare earths and cement is many times greater than other electricity generating sources.

45 Two, will not result in significant loss of available resources for - sorry, will result in significant loss of available resources for future generations, for example, as stated in the EIS, the concrete bases will remain in situ after decommissioning and

currently each multi-tonne blade is buried at the end of life. Three, most logically result in higher electricity costs as many times more tonnes of materials are required to generate each megawatt hour of electricity generated compared to other generating sources, including roof-top solar systems.

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As from its own figures an initial capacity factor of under 30 per cent which declines to 21 per cent by year 25. This decline will be required to be offset by additional sources of electricity generation over time, so causing the need for even greater material requirements.

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In conclusion, our presentation has demonstrated that: (1) the proponent has not adequately responded to submissions; (2) using the then closure of Liddell Power Plant as justification for its project was based on misleading and unsubstantiated information, which SOS highlighted in its submission but for which the proponent ignored in its reply to submissions and was not addressed by the assessment report; (3) based on proponent's EIS and that of Bowmans Creek EIS the project already requires an environmentally damaging and unsustainable quantity of tonnes of materials just for part of its project compared to alternative fully built and operating electricity generating sources.

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The ramifications of so much additional tonnes of materials means, for example, more mining, more global habitat and ecological destruction, significantly greater upfront generation of greenhouse gases, increased end of life waste, loss of resources for future generations, higher energy costs, greater impacts on visual amenity and landscape character, adverse social impacts and increased transport disruption.

25

Commissioners, the proponent has proposed to build 60-plus of some of the largest structures in Australia. Just these structures produce relatively little electricity over their lifetimes, but require inordinate quantities of materials in comparison to other electricity generating sources. We therefore recommend that the commission not consent to the Hills of Gold works proposal. That concludes our presentation. Do have you any questions of me?

30

**MS SYKES:** Thank you - thank you very much, Dennis for your submission. Did you have a question?

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**MR MARSHALL:** Yes, it's Duncan Marshall here. I was just wondering, you alluded to alternative energy sources requiring less material in their construction, but you didn't announce what those might be. I just wondered whether you wanted to speak to that issue?

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**MR ARMSTRONG:** Yes, that was actually included in the paper that I forwarded to you on 18 January. Yes, it includes - it includes a solar works currently being built. It includes averages for solar works, this is from overseas information. It includes nuclear power stations on average. It includes high efficiency, low emissions coal-fired power stations. It also includes - that's a built

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one in Australia. It also includes solar - solar panels on rooftops. So I covered the gambit of the renewables as well as the two possible alternatives of new coal-fired power stations or nuclear plants.

5 **MS SYKES:** Thank you, thank you very much Dennis for your submission.

**MR ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. By the way, a lot of that will be included in our written submission to you.

10 **MS SYKES:** Thank you very much.

**MR ARMSTRONG:** Okay, thank you.

**MS SYKES:** I'd now like to welcome Mark Schmitt.

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**MR SCHMITT:** Thank you for having me. My name is Mark Schmitt. I want to talk to you today from two angles. I'm a farmer here in Nundle, and in other areas as well operating four farms, also as a farm-owner, business-owner, dealing with the third wind farm proposal on one of his farms.

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Firstly, I'll talk a little about where we are located in Nundle. So we are located 2 kilometres south of Nundle on the Crawney Road, on a property called Wombramurra. It was the original property settled east of the Peel River in Nundle, a property of great significance to the history of Nundle.

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If I can paint you a picture, if you come in from the Tamworth end down into Nundle, if you look out at the country straight ahead to your right, all the open country there with the range behind it is Wombramurra. You move further out along the Crawney Road that is historically all the Wombramurra Station, which has been somewhat cut up over the years, but the main homestead area and main farm area close to Nundle, as we call Wombramurra, is where we farm.

30

So the history there involves, I suppose, the things I want to talk about is natural capital. So we are in an area which is rich in natural capital, and we've got a proposal that wants to come in here and devalue the natural capital of Nundle. A little bit has been mentioned about our forefathers who came here and developed the country for farming and forestry and all of those sort of things. Our particular property will suffer significant visual effects and also other effects with traffic and what-have-you from the proposed wind farm.

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The original Wombramurra homestead is a slab - axe-cut slab hut which is still in existence today. That stands there as a current museum and it's full of artefacts of the Wombramurra farm history. That original slab hut was built in 1937 about, still stands and is a museum to the farming history of Wombramurra and Nundle.

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So in 1870 - I'll just say, that particular slab hut was built with a verandah looking at the range. Now, back in those days you would remember there was no other

development here. Those original pioneers came here and built that slab hut facing the Nundle Creek and the range. They were the natural views that they wanted to pick up. They also built it on the junction of the Nundle Creek and the Peel River, also the tributary just above Wombramura Creek. So all items there and the current homestead was built in 1870, and a lot of people here would have been there.

The homestead has a large sprawling verandah to the east and the south looking over the ridge line, the Nundle Creek Valley and the Peel River Valley. Arguably no other homestead would have views of those - the ridge line, the creek valley and the Peel Valley from one location. Yet, we have not even received any discussion, phone call, anything from ENGIE or any representative.

And this - this particular property is of great significance, but it's the natural capital. When these original pioneers first came here and selected that, they went there for a reason. They particularly knew of the beauty and the practical applications we had. We were in a creek with a back-up of a river system. All those practical things those early pioneers knew, and here we are all these years later we are trying to mess with this.

So there's got to be a good outcome to go and wreck all of this. So we're actually really getting visually impacted. We crossed the Crawney Road, we're going to have traffic impacts. We cross stock, we cross machinery over the Crawney Road. That's a big impact. The other impact, because I've been - we lived in the footprint of the Sapphire Wind Farm and we had farms near the White Rock Wind Farm.

Now, one of the things these proponents to these projects don't tell you is all the effects that you will have to live with. We live with red flashing lights out of our back deck for several years. With the complaints to the community those lights had to be turned to fixed red lights, but the impact on the - the dark night sky, the amenity and the beauty of our location, we have, you know, worked hard to purchase, was taken away by someone else.

So, I don't think - because I've experienced two of these wind farms and lived within 1.7 kilometres of one, and we've had all the promises, we've had all the - you know, "We'll put in buffer zones." I've got a piece of paper that says that, "We will build a buffer zone 300m long." This is in front of one of our manager's houses, "100m wide." That buffer zone to this day still hasn't gone in. So we're very sceptical.

But one thing I will say with very much experience with these wind farms, with two farms located and right in the zone, New South Wales Government has put these Renewable Energy Zones in for a reason. These particular sites need to go to the zones where they are applicable and where they belong.

The effect on the landscape in Nundle for long-term with these lights, I don't think anyone understands it until you have actually lived with it. It will change the

aspect, the town, the tourism forever and I have been there and I have witnessed it. I've seen all the promises. The problem with all these companies, big companies, promises, promises. The turbines get built, "We can't do that." The contact drop drops off, I have experience all of that. The love, the kisses, all go.

5 When they're there you live with them and that's the problem.

Nundle is unique. It should not happen on this site. The site is wrong. I'm at the base of the Peel River and the Nundle Creek. When there's run-off from that site, which is big washouts - we have them on our farm - I see the dirt in the river. I've got visual on the creek and the river at the junction. I see exactly what's going on. There's no cultivation up there, so when I see dirt in the river and I see all this mud coming down, that's going into Tamworth's water supply.

15 You know, we're playing with high-risk - I spent 20 years in the irrigation water business before I started in the farming game. It's high-risk. You're playing with stuff you don't even know. We've got fences washed out here two years ago that have been there for 60 years. No one said they would go. All these studies, all these so-called experts, we'll be left living with this after it's all gone and I just think it's too valuable to let it go.

20 Insufficient information. Wrong site. It's going to impact us. It is going to impact everyone else. I've been there. I've seen it. I've had all the promises. I've had all the meetings. On in this site, which is actually the most significant site, we have not seen these wind farm people come to us. I just think it's crazy. Thank you.

25 **MS SYKES:** Thank you. Thank you very much.

**MR MARSHALL:** A quick point of clarification, I just wanted to understand how far your house is from the nearest turbine in-

30 **MR SCHMITT:** We'd be about 8 kilometres, so we rang - so Wombramurra - everyone in Nundle knows it - we have no contact from ENGIE. We rang the Department of Planning, this is several years ago, they couldn't find us on the map. The original station property in Nundle, couldn't find us on the map. They said, "Is that you, are you a shed?" That was 3 kilometres away.

40 Yesterday on your tour you would have drove through - through our property on the Crawney Road, through the back of our property up to one of your inspection sites yesterday on the Head of Peel Road. I don't know how they couldn't find us. But, you know, I think the history of the property, someone should have come and said something. Someone should have taken some interest. Because once you let this natural capital disappear you don't get it back.

45 **MS SYKES:** Thank you very much. Sorry, we have - Mark, we have one more question.

**MR SCHMITT:** Sorry.

**MS GRANT:** I think it's really interesting to hear from your lived experience of the other wind farms and you mentioned the red flashing lights.

5 **MR SCHMITT:** Yep.

**MS GRANT:** People have raised with us concerns about blade glint and noise. Are they elements that you've experienced -

10 **MR SCHMITT:** Look, yes, the closest - so the Sapphire Wind Farm, the turbine that was closest to our manager's house - I didn't actually live on that site, I lived on another farm, which we saw both wind farms - he got noise. They were going to build a buffer zone. They didn't do that. During the construction zone - stage they were going to water the roads. Never did. Never happens. Funny thing is once approval's happened a lot of things just get forgotten. So that manager left because  
15 the noise was there. He didn't like that.

So in a community like Nundle, you know, we're just farmers, we struggle to run successful businesses with no labour now. We're talking about putting wind farms  
20 in here that are going to get this extra labour. Well, I'd like to see where you get it from. We can't run our farms. So, yeah, I just think it just needs some real thought, you know.

**MS SYKES:** Thank you very much. Our next speaker is Richard McLachlan, and we are running a bit behind time, so we would appreciate - you'll hear the first bell  
25 which is two minutes warning and then another bell for one.

**MR MCLACHLAN:** Thank you. Thank you, Commissioners. My name is - my name is Richard McLachlan. I'd like to thank you for coming to Nundle and  
30 undertaking the meeting and I acknowledge Elders past, present and emerging, the Kamilaroi, for their care and preservation of land over thousands of years.

My wife and I and seven children have been involved in this community - with and in this community for over 20 years, so we're newcomers. We're at [REDACTED]  
35 [REDACTED]. Our home is noted as NAD-44 and is approximately - approximately 1320m above sea level, so it's one of the highest dwellings in the area. It's approximately 30 hundred - 3,800 metres north-east of the nearest proposed turbine. We have no financial interest in the project and I've had no meetings with the proponent. I'm also a member of the Hanging Rock RFS  
40 and I thank Vlad Vlasoff for his presentation.

We acknowledge change is very difficult, and it is a tragedy this proposal has divided this community in such a significant way. The inept behaviour of the proponent and major landowners is concerning and disappointing. We do  
45 understand the need for change and the damage coal-fired generation does to our environment. Nevertheless, change is particularly hard on difficult sites.

Whilst my family has significant concerns regarding the proposal and its impacts I would like to raise three points, and if, and I emphasise if, the commission is of a mind to consent to the project I'd like them to consider this. Firstly, staging.

5 Adopting the precautionary principle the commission should direct that the project is staged in at least two stages with the first stage being closer to the south-east section, closer to Ben Halls Gap, furthest from existing affected dwellings. This stage should be monitored carefully over the first five years of operation against key criteria and only if those key criteria are not exceeded or are met only then should stage two proceed.

10 To be clear, as a minimum, WP 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69 and 70, ie, the northern section and WP 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, ie, the western section, should as a minimum be in stage two. Contributions - and whilst there's been a lot of change in the proposed contributions to the community over the life of this application, the way  
15 I can try and understand the current cash contributions to the community, the Community Enhancement Fund and other proposals as they are now proposed is quite pathetic.

20 The proposed VPA contributions or section 7.12 contributions, assuming the VPA is not executed and council does not support the proposal, are less than 1.3 per cent of the project cost based on the original 9.8 contributions proposal, a project cost of \$826 million. I would also note that condition 8.24 on page 8 of the recommended conditions calls up a VPA payment of only \$6.3 million, noting a few smaller - less number of towers, and not all of these - but nevertheless, not all  
25 of these would find their way to benefit the local and affected community.

I'd also note that even in simple residential development contributions that are required are far higher as a percentage of project cost than what is proposed here in this complex proposal. But it is this local community that will bear the brunt of  
30 the effect of this project. This local community should see benefits far greater than proposed.

The landowners will receive significant benefit, millions of dollars in lease payments over the life - every year over the life of the project, but this community  
35 will bear the brunt of the project, the noise, the loss of visual amenity, their view affected and all of the things that this community has spoken about today and will speak about tomorrow.

40 Clearly, the contributions and the give back to the community is completely inadequate. And lastly, decommissioning. There is a condition of consent regarding decommissioning, but how can the community be assured that the proponent will appropriately provision for this future liability. Everything that has gone up that steep mountain will have to come back down. The trucks and the traffic will return. A sinking fund must be established at the cost of the proponent  
45 and the proponent must pay funds adequately every year annually over the many years of the proposed operation to ensure that on cessation adequate funds are available to meet the cost of the decommissioning, that they don't just cut and run.

I urge the commission to consider these matters very carefully for this complex development at this very complex precious and valuable location.

5 **MS SYKES:** Do you have any questions? Thank you. Thank you, Richard. I'd now like to call up Andrew Brown.

**MR BROWN:** G'day. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Andrew Brown and my wife and I, we run the Nundle Fuel & Cafe just across the road.  
10 We're part of the local business community and we support the wind farm. Until about 13 months ago we were content to remain firmly on the fence regarding this wind farm proposal. We don't actually live in Nundle. We live about 10 kilometres away and the wind turbines will not be visible from our home.

15 Ignorantly, I considered it an issue for those who would be directly impacted. This changed when I went down to visit my daughters for Christmas and we had a spirited family discussion and amongst other things it was pointed out that my four grandsons, they're going to have to live with the repercussions of our actions. The things that we do now impact them soon. This applies equally to us as individuals,  
20 our small community here in Nundle, our politicians, our businesses and our public service.

How we act now has long-term implications. During our talk a couple of quotes were thrown around. Statements that I had learnt and used in my younger days,  
25 but now have way more impact upon me. The first being, "You either have to be part of the solution or you're going to be part of the problem." The second is, "Think globally, act locally." I'll refer back to these in my talk.

To start with, I wish to point out that if this development proposal at Hanging  
30 Rock was for, say, a gas fracking site I would be one of the most vociferous opponents that there is. I would be fighting and joining those complaining about the current setup. I would have eagerly utilised the same strategies they have. I too would have searched for every conceivable reason to oppose it. I would have magnified and amplified them. I would have used the same statistical  
35 manipulation strategies and used the media and whichever political party that agreed with me. I would likewise adopt the tactic of having individuals argue against the farm and then having the same people act - speak for their businesses.

I hope you see that I have the utmost empathy and respect for the opponents. I just  
40 disagree with them partly because this is renewable energy. Unless we have enough renewable energy places like the Liverpool Plains, the Pilliga Forest and farmland all around our nation, it will be suffering.

Now you would have to be completely ignorant of our reality or beholden to the  
45 fossil fuel industry to not understand why we need renewable energy. As Barnaby isn't here, I'm going to assume that most everybody understands the science and

realises that we have stopped - we have to stop emitting carbon, methane and other global warming gases as fast as possible, for our grandchildren's sake.

5 So now I find myself trying to be part of the solution. Our town and our community have an opportunity to be part of the solution. The New South Wales Government has previously made a commitment to net zero and that entails the adoption of renewables on a massive scale, so we have a chance to help everybody in the State become part of the solution, and that of course applies to everyone in our nation as well.

10 It is not enough for us to expect others to adopt renewable energy on our behalf. We have to act here and now, locally and as rapidly as possible. In my opinion, to not do so is rather gutless as well. In that discussion I had with my daughter one salient point was made about Hanging Rock, "Dad, if we can't put a wind farm  
15 where the wind blows how useless are we?" I could not leave that one alone. This was followed by some rather pedantic observations about how we tend to build coal power stations where there's coal, ports where there are oceans, dams where there are rivers and so on, yet the logic rings true. We have the chance to utilise a renewable resource at a time when investment is needed it's available and for the  
20 most part it's wanted.

When I look around our town I see a fair few roof-top solar mounted panels which means that people have made the investment that has eventually decreased their power bills. A simple economical calculation. That same sort of calculation can be  
25 made regarding the community hosting a wind farm. There are economic benefits for all of us and opportunities for others. It has been shown that we will have access to cheaper electricity.

30 Our town and others nearby will also benefit from the grants that will be handed out by ENGIE. Community organisations can be developed like the Foodbank and existing ones that are struggling can get a boost. There is also the not insignificant fact that we will have another local industry for our kids to aspire getting employment with and it has been estimated that 16 positions at least will be  
35 available after the construction phase of the wind farm. That is not to be sneezed at. It is a significant number. It is - it's not - if it's not locals it will be people moving into your town. We need this.

40 I have no doubt that the wind farm will help with other businesses in town and most of us could do with that help. Already this morning we've heard quite a bit of illogical scaremongering which all pales into insignificance when compared with the existential threat we all face thanks to global warming.

45 I'm going to finish with one quote my daughter gave me, "What will the people of Nundle do when their grandchildren look them in the eye and ask, 'What did you do to help fight the climate change battle dad - grand-dad?', and all they can do is say that they fought to keep their views pristine."

**MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, Andrew, for your submission. I see that you've prepared some notes there, so if you are able to also submit that in writing that would be fantastic. Did you have any questions? So our next speaker is Roger Sydenham.

5

**MR SYDENHAM:** Rightio. Hi everybody, my name is Roger Sydenham. I'm the manager of Arc-en-Ciel Trout Farm in Hanging Rock, AD 05 on your map, and landholder on Morrisons Gap Road, AD 15. I'll keep this pretty brief and put more of the facts and figures and economics and that sort of thing in the written submissions just to keep time down and that sort of thing. There's been a lot of talk about the 190.54 hectares of land clearing. I'd just like to sort of reiterate and redirect that. There are - I've done biodiversity conservation stewardship agreements with several neighbouring landholders, ensuring about 800 hectares of land are protected for perpetuity. That's four times the amount that gets cleared for the wind farm.

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For perspective, Ben Halls Gap National Park covers 517 hectares. The biodiversity surveyors, I believe that came up and didn't just assess this site, they also assessed neighbouring properties looking for various fauna and flora species and doing population surveys and that sort of thing. I believe they were very diligent, persistent. I remember letting them into the gate in absolutely pouring cold rain because they wanted to get their job done. They went places a lot of people wouldn't even go just to fulfil their task.

20

So anyhow, the way that they have worked and looked at critical and endangered biodiversity habitats and that sort of thing is essentially - I know that it's an offset, but they've basically targeted to protect areas and species and that sort of thing on adjacent land. It's also been strategically set up to basically link all of the national parks and nature reserves between Ben Halls Gap and Wallabadah.

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I personally think that's a net positive for the environment. On top of that there's - so, anyhow, the creation and preservation of these wildlife corridors in conjunction with Ben Halls Gap National Park and Nature Reserve, Crawney Pass National Park and Wallabadah Nature Reserve totals to an amount of 5,778 hectares that they have committed to reserve for perpetuity, not just the life of the project.

35

The landowners - landholders involved are offered assistance with feral pest management, weed management, regeneration, all of that sort of thing as well, which is something that most of us love the bush out there, it's just one of those really expensive things that are almost impossible to keep on top of. Having a large company providing funding to assist with that will be absolute game-changer.

40

So, in conclusion, I'll provide - I'll provide all of the mapping. I assume you have it anyway, and further information on the economics of the biodiversity credits. Thanks.

45

**MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, Roger. Do you have any questions? Thanks very much, Roger. So our next speaker is Megan Trousdale.

5 **MS TROUSDALE:** Okay, our family lives at NAD-76 in the Nundle cluster of residences west and north-west of the project. Our house is located in VIZ2, just over 8 kilometres from the nearest wind turbines, 63, 62 and 68. We have just finished rebuilding our 1950s house based on the original floor plan and a design that pre-exists the wind farm. Our living areas, bedrooms and verandahs are oriented to the views of the range. We have an unscreened view of 14 wind turbines, according to the photo montage provided. And just for background, I am Mark Schmitt's neighbour, so what I can see, his property has similar impacts.

15 More turbines would be visible from curtilage on our property such as gardens and entertaining areas. O'Hanlon Design estimates between 40 and 75 turbines are potentially visible at 8 kilometres. There would be aviation hazard lighting every - at least every 900m. O'Hanlon states that residences on the southern edge of Nundle township are more likely to be affected by any potential changes to the broader landscape character.

20 Removing 17 turbines from the project has relieved some visible impacts to our property. In the recommended 47 turbine layout the seven closest and most prominent turbines 64 to 70 remain visible from our house. Screening to mitigate the visual impact is not possible because our house is 7 metres from our rear eastern boundary and the elevation of the turbines on the mountain range.

25 Partial screening of turbines by our neighbour's windbreak is not acceptable, because the health and condition - continued existence of this planting is beyond our control. I support the turbine - the removal of turbines 53 to 63 and request the removal of turbine 64 to 70 to reduce the visual impact on multiple residences and public viewpoints.

35 Living next to Nundle Creek and Peel River I am a close observer of the health of both. I do not support disturbing 190 hectares of native vegetation and compacting and concreting at the head of the Upper Peel Catchment. This goes against regenerative agricultural principles that aim to preserve vegetation on mountain ranges to slow the flow of run-off and increase infiltration for water storage and release over time via springs, creeks and rivers.

40 I support removal of turbine 42 to reduce biodiversity impacts on Ben Halls Gap Nature Reserve and request the removal of all turbines on the Ben Halls Gap Nature Reserve boundary.

45 I walk several times a week on Nundle roads, individually and as part of a walking group. We enjoy the amenity of walking on quiet country roads which contributes to our health and wellbeing. Traffic on Jenkins Street, Oakenville Street, Nundle Road are estimated to increase four to six times what it is now during the morning

and evening peak and will be noticeable against the usual baseline. The disruption of roadworks and additional light and heavy vehicles during construction period will reduce our family's enjoyment of living in Nundle.

- 5 There is a lay-by proposed south of Nundle Creek on Crawney Road, noise and vehicle lights from this lay-by would disturb our household. I request that this is relocated outside the property of an associated dwelling, not a non-associated dwelling.
- 10 We don't know whether Nundle Creek, Pearly Gates or Nundle bridges will be replaced. This would cause additional noise and traffic disruption and safety concerns for our household. Given that Nundle is a tourism location, I request there is no construction and no blasting on Saturdays. The DPA - actually, you can go through the slides, they're not linked to any particular talk. They're just - this is
- 15 how much that I value the range because I photograph it all the time. Whether it's in morning, whether it's cloud, whether it's really interesting light on the range at sunset. It is just something that is a central part of my life.

20 The Department's Assessment Report and recommended conditions of consent are missing critical information about proposed internal tracks and public road modifications. This exposes the community to excessive risk in relation to transport, biodiversity and visual impacts. The Applicant does not have access to the project area with no agreement with Nungaroo Aboriginal Land Council, no neighbour agreements with key non-associated dwellings, on the transport route

25 and incomplete engineering for extreme internal tracks, in particular, the Western Connector Road and Transverse Track. I ask the Commissioners to determine rejection of Hills of Gold Wind Farm.

30 **MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, Megan. I would now like to call up Danielle Sassi or Daniel, sorry.

**MR SASSI:** I've been a resident of Nundle for two years - nearly two years and have made a significant investment in the town by purchasing the home, and I'm a ratepayer. I'd like to begin with an extract from appendix K of the assessment

35 report. Section 214(4) for visual influence zone two, the landscape scenic integrity performance objective is that:

40 " Wind turbines should not cause significant modification of the visual catchment. Turbines may be visually apparent and may be a major element in the landscape but should not dominate the existing visual catchment."

And then 217(5):

45 "For both VIZ1 and 2 the key feature disruption performances objectives are to avoid for VIZ1 and to minimise for VIZ2 the impact of wind turbines or ancillary facilities that result in the removal of visual alteration, disruption of identified key landscape features which includes any major or visually

significant landform, water form, vegetation or cultural features that have visual prominence or are focal points.”

5 I was attracted to Nundle to come here and live for several reasons. It's beautiful  
rural village atmosphere, historical charm, friendly tight-knit community located  
in a really quiet - and yes it's the end of the road, but for me and my work it's quite  
central because I work from everywhere all the way up to Guyra, as far down as  
Scone; the incredible view and scenery of the surrounding mountains and  
10 landscape, particularly from my residence, which adds significant value to my  
property; the outstanding environmental and ecological values of the area and just  
the range of activities, indoor, outdoor, accessible to all who live in and visit the  
area, including shopping it, dining, local food and produce, music arts, swimming  
water activities, fishing, hunting camping, bush walking and gold fossicking, to  
name a few.

15 My objections to the wind farm project are based on the diminishment of these  
values. In my strong opinion the wind farm project for the community - I've made  
some great connections with people since moving here, with people on both sides  
of the argument - however, there is an underlying tension. The project has already  
20 divided a strong community, which sadly - which sadly may deepen further if it  
goes ahead. That's my thought. Personally speaking, I've been attacked for my  
position on this project and have been made to feel very unwelcome in one of our  
established businesses, which I will not mention.

25 The visual impact, based on the Wind Energy Visual Assessment Bulletin by  
Planning New South Wales the scenic quality at my residence which is in the  
village would be classified as high, level one sensitivity, as I'm in the residential  
village. However, with the towers in the far, middle ground and near background,  
by the definition my residence is classified in the VIZ2 zone.

30 So I've brought a couple of photos along, but I'll put them on the written  
submission as well. My property is just across the road on the hill. Sits at 630  
metres, and the view, I must say, is quite spectacular. Now, in the planning  
documentation which I've read Nundle residents north of  
35 Hall Street are not considered to be non-associated dwellings. There have been no  
consultations with residents who have an elevated position, especially those like  
myself who are facing south towards the project.

40 To suggest that there will be minimal visual impact from my property is ludicrous.  
The first - that first photo I've just shown you is facing 210 degrees south-west.  
This view is the most spectacular and impressive as everything I have seen in New  
South Wales, especially in winter. Now, up to 14 towers, I predict from the  
mapping that I've seen on the portal, up to 14 towers from the southern end of the  
project would dominate my skyline. The suggestion that the distance from my  
45 home, which is probably about 10 K will mitigate the visual impact of these, I  
don't buy it, when one can clearly see one the most distant individual trees with

the naked eye on sight. The line I have drawn on the photo estimates the extra 230 metre height of the turbines.

5 I've got one more photo I'd like to show you, which is from a different perspective on a different part of the property, which is looking 135 south-east, which is a view of the northern end of the project, around Morrisons Gap Road. Up to seven towers will dominate this skyline alongside the Hanging Road Crag from certain angles as well, around 8 K from my property. They fall into VIZ2 category, and as far as I'm concerned, will be a blight on the extraordinary landscape that I'm privy to.

10 The view of the towers from this position could be mitigated. As you can see, I've got some space there, but I'd much prefer the view of the natural landscape, than a closed view of the wind farm, and I'd like to invite yourselves, if you have time to visit my property and see the outstanding visual impact from both directions, especially the southern view.

15 Traffic is one of my biggest concerns. The proposed six-day week movement of project traffic using Lindsays Gap Road, Oakenville Street, Barry Road, 20 Morrisons Gap Road, potentially Crawney Road will make a heavy and excessively long impact on Nundle residents and tourists.

25 My profession requires me to regularly travel in all directions including south using the New England Highway. With the proposed road construction and later movement of machinery and parts along Lindsays Gap Road my travel patterns and time will be heavily impacted. I'm sure I'm not the only resident who will be affected by this.

30 However, I'm unclear as to whether there will be any compensation from the developers for this impact. I don't even know if there's going to be a timetable of their traffic movement, let alone for the construction phase when they are bringing all the materials in.

35 Access to the outstanding environment and ecological values which the Nundle community and tourists love and enjoy at Hanging Rock, Sheba Dam, the trout farm, Ponderosa Park, The Forest Way, Crawney, Ben Hall and all the small villages beyond will be heavily impacted by the excessive and inappropriate movement of oversized machinery for a significant amount of time.

40 Access to the village for our residents and tourists will also be severely compromised and I believe these traffic disruptions over the planned construction of the project will also put the highly important tourist industry that current Nundle businesses heavily rely on at risk. Our businesses reflect our community in that they are diverse, creative and culturally and heritage-proud. If tourists are 45 inconvenienced they will not come. This project poses a serious economic threat to the wider community, for this reason, especially in the short to medium term.

Our beautiful landscape - I beg your pardon, our landscape is beautiful and therefore the imposition of soaring towers on every hilltop will be a blight on it, not an enhancement. But of far more significance will be the interruption to the way of life I cherish, removed from the hurly burly metropolis, whether it's  
5 Tamworth or the city, whose-ever - whose growing demands for power are the reason that this glorious place is about to be defiled in my opinion, this construction drags on as construction projects are wont to do, this town with its tourism-based economy may be decimated. I don't want to see that.

10 If we really want to create projects that help reduce carbon in our atmosphere, how about we celebrate the environment as a community, plant a few more trees perhaps, sequester some carbon, rather than destroying the peace, tranquillity and spectacular place that makes Nundle so special. Thanks.

15 **MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, Daniel. Oh Daniel, sorry we might -

**MS GRANT:** Sorry, if you could just clarify whereabouts you are. I think you said you are in-

20 **MR SASSI:** Straight across the road on the hill.

**MS GRANT:** Which - just what's the street name?

25 **MR SASSI:** [REDACTED].

**MS GRANT:** Thank you.

**MR SASSI:** [REDACTED].

30 **MS SYKES:** So our next speaker is Susie Hooper.

**MS HOOPER:** Thank you. Hello, my name is Susie Hooper. I'm an owner of a property on Morrisons Gap Road which is known as NAD-24 and just over 2 kilometres from the nearest turbine. Today I would like to speak to you about the  
35 impacts from the planned upgrade of Morrisons Gap Road from a landholder's perspective. Draft condition B30 permits all vehicles, except those transporting blades, to use Morrisons Gap Road. I do not support this condition. The Department's estimate - assessment report estimates 78 light vehicles, 63 heavy vehicles and six heavy vehicles requiring an escort per day to use Morrisons Gap  
40 Road. Quite an extreme increase in the number of vehicles currently using the road.

I'm going to assume that the panel's site visits have included a few trips along  
45 Morrisons Gap Road in the last couple of days as it's currently the easiest access to the development site. It's almost impossible not to notice how stunningly beautiful the drive is along the road, how quiet it is and how completely unsuitable it is for

the traffic proposed without making substantial modifications to it, modifications which require removing native trees to widen the road.

5 Draft condition B22 states there is to be no clearing of native vegetation or fauna habitat located outside of the development corridor. I am in support of this condition, however, clarification is required. Morrisons Gap Road is not shown as part of the development corridor. The route studied by [REDACTED] dated 29 May '23 confirms that Morrisons Gap Road requires wide-roadening along its entirety and includes tree removal, so condition B22 seems to be prohibiting the widening of this road.

15 We heard earlier from Steve Brake explaining some of the heavy vehicles to use the road have the potential to be up to 300 or more tonnes. One can only assume the extensive work required will lead to irreversible negative impacts on the character of our road and we can only assume this because there are no details provided to indicate otherwise.

20 Draft condition B32 refers to road upgrades, but only states in table 7.2 that Morrisons Gap Road is to be upgraded and necessary to proposed sealed standard. I do not support this condition. From a developer's point of view what a wonderfully worded malleable condition of consent. The possibilities of what is, "as necessary" are endless.

25 There has been no assessment of this upgrade. There certainly hasn't been any information provided to landholders along the road either. We have no confidence that the works won't require trespassing on our properties just for a start.

30 There is no mention in any of the case documents on the IPC website of any further assessment to take into account the removal of those trees and the impact that will have to our amenity or the irreversible alteration to the landscape character of our road. The trees along Morrisons Gap Road are the same trees which the LVIA report seems to be relying on for visual impact mitigation from many vantage points along the road. There has been no assessment of the impact of removing those trees for the road widening.

35 This development has had a huge negative impact on me personally, the construction of our home lies in the balance of this project. Before any mention of the wind development was announced my husband and I put the wheels in motion to get our house built, but we came across a few constraints with our DA-approved house site so we searched to find a more suitable site. We're now unable to even contemplate applying to modify our DA because shortly after finding the more suitable house site the proposed industrial wind development next door was announced and there is no information to determine that there would be anything but very high impacts on us.

45 Our requests to the proponents to provide further information in writing were ignored. We've come to the frustrating realisation that our property is now

burdened by constraints and uncertainty from this proposed wind development and we're unable to confidently proceed with the construction of our house. The substandard assessment by the Department of the inaccurate documentation submitted and the loosely-worded draft conditions of consent do nothing to alleviate any of the concerns I've raised today.

How can the Department draw a conclusion and state that the project complies with all relevant legislation, such as ecologically sustainable development principles when the full extent of the impacts to the community remain unassessed and unknown.

I've only spoken about one access route to the project site. However, there's no evidence that any constructible access is possible for this development. I ask the Commissioners to reject this project.

**MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, Susie. We didn't have any other questions for our submission. But thank you very much for your submission. I'll now move on to Kerry Nixon.

**MS NIXON:** My name is Kerry Nixon. I moved to Nundle in - the end of April last year, and I had no idea that a wind farm was expected to arrive on the landscape.

Now I arrived in Nundle and found work very quickly and I work on the weekends at the wool mill. And as such, I am in the absolutely perfect position of talking widely to enormous numbers of the tourists who come to our town on a regular basis. Some do come regularly. Others come just purely by chance, but when they get here what they like, what turns them on and makes them feel fabulous is the idea that this is a pristine little part of the world, that it's somehow removed from all the things that upset them about built-up areas, that there isn't the industrial on the landscape in a big way, and what they like is the quaintness, the beauty, and the offering of tourism that is available to them.

So I'm intrigued that what is proposed actually has the capability of ruining the tourism prospects for this town throughout the whole of the construction phase, and not every business will survive that. In fact, you can guarantee that some businesses will suffer so much from a lack of tourism that they will not be able to get going again when that destructive construction phase is completed. So I worry from that perspective.

My second far bigger worry comes from having read all the documents on the site today. Not only the appendices, but the recommended conditions of consent and I also went through all the submissions from the public for, against and sitting on the fence.

My concern really comes down to this, when you build a house, there is a building inspector who comes to check that you have complied with the conditions that

were set out. I'm wondering who is the inspector to make sure that what is proposed actually is delivered to the standard set in the recommended conditions of consent. Because the possibility of not complying can be devastating, not only for this wonderful little town, that has made me feel incredibly welcome, but for the ecology of the whole region, to have more silt going into an already degraded river system, which is an integral part of the Murray-Darling Basin, also heavily degraded, but that additionally silt going into the river system could very well change the flood capabilities on the flood plain from here through to the Chaffey Dam and possibly further down the track as well.

We have in this country the hideous reputation for extinction. We have killed off in 250-odd years of white settlement more animals than any other country. We have no idea the impact of this on a very delicate ecosystem, on a very tricky part of the landscape. That can be changed rapidly with the construction phase, but also once those big towers are in place birds will be affected, and there is nothing more beautiful than seeing the eagles wafting on the wind high up. They're the ones in most danger, sadly. Thank you.

**MS SYKES:** We'll just move to our next speaker - thank you very much, Kerry, for your submission - to Ella Worley and it's our final speaker before a very short break.

**MS WORLEY:** My name is Ella Worley. I'm an 18-year-old Kamilaroi woman and resident of Nundle. I have spent my entire life to this point living in Nundle, attending the local schools and working in Nundle. As a young person who was focused on our future and our climate I strongly object to the proposal in its entirety and what it means for my local community and environment.

You will hear many people talk about this being the future and the future - for future generations. I am one of those future generations. Our environment here needs to be preserved. There is going to be more and more industrialisation and a need for unique areas like Nundle, my home. We are surrounded by REZs which are going to be significantly developed. We are not in a REZ. We need to keep areas like Nundle and its surrounds in its current state to counter these other developments. We need to make sure we do not fall into the trap of renewables at the cost of our environment.

As a student of the local high school part of our cultural experience has been excursions to Hanging Rock due to the pristine nature of the environment, but in particular the dark skies. The illumination of towers with aviation lighting, as referred to on pages 44 points 150 and 151, is not acceptable. This will destroy the darkness and replace an authenticity of a culturally significant sky. Turbines should be removed from the area to cater for this.

My family property borders the project area. It is on Nundle Creek Road. My family owns CAD-3. It is in close proximity to NAD-5. Our dwelling at this location is under construction. The noise at NAD-5 exceeds the standards. The

noise at the site of our dwellings is just as likely to exceed the standards. The proponent has not carried out noise monitoring at this site to accurately measure the noise. This needs to be done. Also there is significant cumulative impact on our property from multiple turbines including 64, 65, 66 and 67.

5

I live on Crawney Road. Our house is set back about 70 metres from the road. The increased traffic is going to have a significant impact on our ability to enjoy our home. The quietness of the road was the reason for moving here. The proponent has not offered strategies to us to mitigate this, nor discuss the increased movement and the impacts with us. This needs to happen.

10

As a student who up until the end of last year regularly travelled the route from Nundle along Lindsays Gap Road to the highway to get to school, I can speak of the level of anxiety and fear I often felt - often felt due to this road already being in use by loaded and unloaded logging trucks. The road doesn't cope. I have genuinely feared for my life on occasions and I have seen - I have seen the accidents which have occurred on this road. There is no consideration at all given to the psychological risk of young people travelling this road to get to school are going to experience with the amount of traffic that will be coming through, particularly with oversized overmass vehicles.

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The bus travels this road both morning and afternoon and I know from witnessing components come along the highway that they arrive in the area in prime school travel time. This should not be left up to the decision of the proponent but made a hard no to transport of oversize, overmass vehicles during any school bus travel time.

25

We are not a REZ, and the fact that we are close to a REZ is not a reason for this development but is in fact a reason to not have this development here, but to keep my home as the jewel that it is for me and all those around. Allow us to maintain our uniqueness and be a place people can come to escape the industrialisation of the REZ around.

30

This is my home. I am the future generation who will be living here. Why is it that people who don't live here and never will are making decisions about how I should live to line their pockets with profits. Please take the time to truly understand the major environmental impacts, visual impacts and social impacts this proposal will have on us. It has destroyed us as a community, and this is not the place for a development. The first speaker from the Department made it clear that the majority of the community have objected - continually objected. The IPC is an independent body. Please help us maintain our environment. Thank you.

35

40

**MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, Ella, for your submission. We're just now going to take a very short break before we begin our final session for the day. We've scheduled 10 minutes, but we will need to commence sharp.

45

**<THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 5.30 PM**

**<THE MEETING RESUMED AT 5.49 PM**

5 **MS SYKES:** Welcome to the final session for day one, the Hills of Gold Wind Farm SSD-9679 Public Meeting. Our first speaker is John Mackay.

10 **MR MACKAY:** Yes, good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to come along and say a few words, and I'll be adding my voice to the chorus of opposition to the proposed project.

Those that don't know me, my name is Johnny - Macky, Mackay sometimes or Mackay, whatever and I live up on [REDACTED], to be precise, and it's in close proximity to the proposed wind turbines.

15 I've had the block for some 25 years. I live up there permanently now, and to me it's an idyllic lifestyle, laid-back, quiet, magnificent views, not - both inside the house - from inside the house, outside, the surrounds, and cool climate, which I enjoy and the abundance of native wildlife, which I also enjoy, but, you know and the list goes on. But it's still close enough to, some would consider, civilisation, in  
20 other words, down the hill, and look, I just love the place. Actually, I love the area, and like I said, I live here permanently now.

But, unfortunately, this would change dramatically if a proposed development went ahead, and it's not hard to imagine why. Chair, I have several concerns, I  
25 believe need to be addressed, but to raise them at this forum would exceed my allocated time limit and possibly breach some of the guidelines set down by you for today's meeting. Therefore I will be outlining these concerns in a written submission in the coming days.

30 Look, in reality, in the overall scheme of things, I'm just a small fish in a big ocean, so to speak, one of the little people, but I'm not here objecting purely out of self-interest. That's not just me. Anyone who knows me knows it's not me. But one does not need to hold a degree in sociology to realise that the proposal has already had a dramatic negative effect on the local communities.

35 Let's face it, they are fractured, they're divided, and I can detect and no doubt others can too, there's a degree of tension. Some friendships have been strained, but I'm also an optimist. I believe time is a great healer - excuse me - and the friendships that have fallen will or can be - can be repaired and life can regain a  
40 more - or shall we say, an agreeable level of normality. Just say the traditional country laid-back Nundle lifestyle. But this cannot be achieved, I don't believe, if the proposal - sorry, if the proposal is rejected. If approved, this cannot happen, no way it can happen as there will be a constant reminder hanging over the area in the form of these massive structures, constant noise, flashing lights, and visual  
45 pollution, I suppose. It's not intermittent. It's 24 hours a day, seven days a week, year in year out.

And I'm getting a bit of age on me now and this is not the legacy that I'd like to leave the young blokes - the young people of the future - of tomorrow. Madam Chair, in closing, like I said, I'm brief, I'd really like to ask you and your panel to protect my home, lifestyle and what I've worked for many years. I'm not a man  
5 with a great amount of money, basically all I've got, and something to leave me kids, protect my neighbours, the community, the community members, the environment and our - our future generation, from what I consider, from where I sit, from what I consider to be only - nothing more than environmental vandalism. The only way that this can be done is for the proposal to be rejected.

10 Now, the actual proposal, dependent on who you talk to, it's been sugar-coated to me many times. But really when you lick the sugar off the bitterness underneath will long remain, so please don't let that happen. If it does it's too late then and I thank you for your time and my submission will be in within a couple of days,  
15 thank you.

**MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, John. Thank you, John. Our next speaker is George Macdonald, representing the Wallabadah Catchment Community, Wallabadah Community Association.

20 **MR MACDONALD:** Commissioners, thank you for the invitation. The pronunciation is Wallabadah -

**MS SYKES:** I'm sorry.

25 **MR MACDONALD:** - so, yes, I'm representing the Wallabadah Community Association, town community, about 400 voters, community of about 600, 700 people, and also the Wallabadah Creek Catchment Community, which represents some 17 land holdings which is the entire catchment, which this affects on the  
30 other side of the range.

So our most important fundamental asset is water. We don't exist without water. The village doesn't - doesn't drink without groundwater and the groundwater we get falls in our catchment. It is not coming from elsewhere. So water is an  
35 existential issue for us.

So that then we come to, you know, we're not - again, from our Wallabadah community point of view - interested citizens have different views, but as a community organisation are, or as two community organisations, we have no view  
40 on - on Hills of Gold per se, except that we believe that good public policy and good consultation and good risk assessment, which is what you guys are here to make a decision on, should be adhered to in the context, you know, we are all about renewable energy, but you know there is renewable energy and there's renewable energy, and so many of you have seen them all over the world. I have  
45 never seen one on top of a mountain top, but they've all been on flat land where the wind blows whichever way.

So having said that, our issues are twofold, I guess, one is the level of consultation, because we are going to get - we understand some six to nine months of - sorry, there was one I need to say, that is that the ENGIE gave us \$8,000 into the community association, so I declare that, so the views that we're expressing  
5 might be somewhat considered to be somewhat churlish but I think the point is that they are long-term - if they come here they're a long-term member of our community and \$8,000 is a drop in the bucket if they get it wrong.

We took it quite seriously. We've read Martin Thomas' UNE view and I hope - I  
10 commend that to the Commissioners, if they haven't done that, but I think the two points made in that. Sorry, going back to my first point, one is we have had no real consultation, no genuine consultation about what's going to happen in our catchment. You know, we understand from a distance that there are roads being built, there are booster stations coming in there, as I said six to nine months' worth  
15 of work that is going on, which will impact on our community in a major way, one would expect, and it's only right that we would be let know and actually taken through that as a community.

The second issue is this issue of water, and there are other public - many of you  
20 have made other references to the public policy of illegal land clearing and all sorts of things which I think this - this project embraces, that, you know, in a world where there are other alternatives for, you know - you know, I think we can all say there are probably five or six alternative energy plants within 100 kilometre radius of this, so then we get - so, if you look at Martin's advice on - there is no  
25 risk analysis on water, long-term water and that is a big issue if they get that wrong. There is no commitment to underwriting that risk.

There's the erosion data is done on really clunky models, that the CSIRO said, you know, "We wouldn't rely on this." There has been - the - in summary, the  
30 environmental assessment has been crude to almost non-existent relative to other things, so - but I challenge the commission in closing to think whether ENGIE, if they were building a similar thing on the top of an alpine power - a mountain range, given that this is our only one, whether they would be allowed to get away with the level of, you know, cursory and essentially minimal investment in risk  
35 assessment, which allows communities like ours to make really important long-term decisions about things which are existential for us. So that's our position.

**MS SYKES:** George, George, sorry - sorry, just had a question. I just had one - a  
40 question. Did you have - just a quick question. Just in terms of the context of water and in terms of your representation around the catchment community -

**MR MACDONALD:** Yes.

**MS SYKES:** Could you clarify for myself and my fellow Commissioners, the  
45 types of concerns that you might have, as in groundwater, water quality, water discharge or water use for the project?

**MR MACDONALD:** Thank you, commissioner. It's really about underground water.

5 **MS SYKES:** Okay.

**MR MACDONALD:** And our fundamental reliance on this catchment in - you know, there is more water - I mean what - the water that feeds the Murray-Darling system largely falls in these catchments up here. That's a little known fact.  
10 Everybody thinks - you know, complaints about the irrigators, but if things go wrong here the irrigators don't get water.

You know, we've been - you know, our - our water supply - our underground water supplies have been diminishing, you know, council records - if you go to  
15 LPC, if you ask LPC around about our town bores, they've been going downwards since the 1980s, and similarly - I'm not an expert on Nundle, but I understand there have been water problems at Nundle as well. There are certainly - been water problems in Tamworth.

20 That assessment has not - there's nothing on water or long-term hydrology in the assessment. I can - you know, it's hard to believe that ENGIE would get away with that in Europe and I don't think - why are we subject to - why are we creating a different lower set of standards for ourselves here, so -

25 **MS SYKES:** Thank you for clarifying that, thank you, very much.

**MR MACDONALD:** Thank you.

**MS SYKES:** Our next speaker is Yestin Hooper who I believe is dialling in by  
30 phone.

**YESTIN HOOPER:** Hello?

**MS SYKES:** Hello, Yestin.

35 **MR HOOPER:** Yeah, good to go, are we?

**MS SYKES:** Yes, we are good to go, thank you.

40 **MR HOOPER:** Sorry. Righto, Commissioners. My name is Yestin Hooper and I own a property on Morrisons Gap Road, known as NAD-24, and also have interest in my parents property NAD-12 which is next door, across the road.

45 After reviewing the Department's Assessment Report and conditions of consent, I support the Department's recommendations to remove the 17 nominated turbines. However, I believe there are remaining issues that require consideration.

5 The Applicant proposes to utilise our existing vegetation to achieve visual impact compliance. Visual impact at NAD-12 and 24 is VIZ1. The proposed mitigation is without our consent or agreement. The Applicant's proposal burdens our land with new and unwelcomed land use constraints. Our land is currently able to be cleared for primary production and private native forest reuse, according to the local zone. Clearing can also occur to facilitate asset protection zones for bushfire mitigation.

10 The southern portion of our land is where the existing vegetation is located for the proponent's proposed mitigation. This land will now be effectively sterilised and limit the scope of any future development opportunities due to this proposed mitigation.

15 To assist the Commissioners in understanding my point of contention, I will draw comparisons to the planning principles and control measures used in bushfire mitigation. The New South Wales Planning For Bushfire document VPB, provides standards and guidance for assessment authorities when assessing bushfire hazards. The primary mitigation control measure within this document is an asset protection zone, which you're probably well aware is a cleared area surrounding an asset.

20 As a general principle APZs are located on the development allotment only. When proposed development cannot achieve an APZ due to size constraints, then adjoining allotments can be considered to locate an APZ. Well, although adjoining lands can be considered is actively discouraged by consent authorities for the following reasons: An agreement from the adjoining landholder must be obtained and an easement formed on that allotment to guarantee that the APZ is in place for perpetuity, therefore placing a permanent land use restriction on the neighbouring allotment; the benefiting party is generally responsible for the maintenance of the APZ and, so use of the adjoining land has potential to become problematic through future landownership changes, dispute between parties, and also places new constraints on the adjoining land. Hence, why it is only allowed in exceptional circumstances.

35 I ask the Commissioners to consider the Applicant is directly relying on our existing vegetation to achieve visual impact compliance. This is not dissimilar to a neighbouring party relying on adjoining land to achieve a compliant APZ on adjoining land described in my previous analogy.

40 There is one crucial distinction, however. An adjoining land APZ has a legal agreement between the parties that specify the extent of the mitigation control measures, the resultant land use restraints and who is responsible for maintenance.

45 As the recommended conditions stand, we have no recourse in the event the existing vegetation is removed through bushfire, storm or snow event, to address any resultant visual impacts. I therefore request the Commissioners apply conditions of consent requiring the Applicant to secure an impact agreement between the parties of NAD-12 and NAD-24 before construction of turbine 64, 65,

66, 67, 68, 69 and 70 or our preferred condition is to remove turbine 64 through to turbine 70 from the project entirely. I note removal would also benefit other non-associated receivers.

5 I would also draw the Commissioners' attention to the fact these turbines are marginal generators, as they are required to run in curtailed modes to achieve noise compliance at other receivers and their close proximity to public road, that will also be subject to other hazards such as ice and blade throw events and high visual impacts from public viewpoints.

10

As time is limited today, please review my written submission for further details, and to the other gaps that I have found in these conditions of consent. Thank you for listening to my concerns.

15 **MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, Yestin, and we certainly look forward to receiving your submission in writing as well.

**MR HOOPER:** Absolutely, yes, no worries.

20 **MS SYKES:** Our next speaker is Ian Worley.

**MR WORLEY:** Yaama. My name is Ian Worley, and I grew up in Nundle and I'm a Nundle resident, Kamilaroi man and landowner whose property borders this proposed development. I have an approved dwelling DA, DAD 03, which is currently under construction. I run a primary production business and farm experience business. I also use my property for cultural learning experiences for students at my school. I was the principal of Nundle Public School and am now the principal of Quirindi High School. My family, my entire extended family, will be directly impacted by the proposed development.

30

The proposed development is outside of any REZ. The development should not be approved just based on these grounds. This is significant. The next point, the psychosocial hazards are immense. I place it on public record that the psychological hazards created by this long-running impactful proposal have in no way been considered and the ongoing nature of this proposal has drained and divided a once positive and proactive local community. There's no social licence.

35

I have personally had two people speak with me in relation to the fact that they have considered self-harm as a result of the ongoing burden of the proposal. These people carried on to state they would seriously consider suicide rather than live with what this project will do to them. How will this risk be mitigated? The proposal in its entirety should be denied.

40

Page 22.81 actually describes why the project is not appropriate as opposed to why it should be built. It is on a ridge line in a highly visible area on land that is prone to slips with sudden changes in topography. I quote what is in the document.

45

Page 37.122 refers to my brother's property, which adjoins my property. The point continues to neglect the fact that there is an approved DA for a dwelling with a marked location which has been shown to the proponent and the house site physically shown. The proponent must recognise this with the visual and noise impacts. The location of the dwelling is not being moved and is under 2 kilometres from the proposed turbines.

This approved DA - sorry, this approved DA is around 500 metres from NAD-5, which you visited yesterday, at the end of Nundle Creek Road. And therefore would be considered VIZ1 and the noise impacts the same. I request on my brother's behalf that the proponent recognise his DA and location as shown to them and place it on their maps and assume responsibility for the impacts.

Page 38, DAD 03, belongs to me. I disagree this is VIZ2 rating. The location for the dwelling, which has been started, will rate VIZ1. It is 2.5 kilometres from the turbines. Properties over 8 kilometres away are being rated as VIZ2. Why is my property being rated as VIZ2, when it is so close and has such a view?

An independent expert rated it as VIZ1 as well. So the rating needs to be changed. I asked for that to happen and appropriate measures taken to mitigate. I would - removal of at least turbine 63 and 62 has already been mentioned. The boundary of my property run for both primary production and farm experience borders the development and proposed turbines 64, 65 and 66, all fall under 2 kilometres from my boundary. These turbines need to be removed for this reason. They are highly visible from the property.

Screening is a naive option and shows a complete lack of understanding of rural living and the reason for being in a rural area. It shows a standard colonialised understanding of connection to land - with the land and completely disregards my cultural connection. It is not an effective mitigation measure, and is completely ineffective for our environment. Living in a rural area is not about what you see from your kitchen window.

Removal of turbines must be given greater consideration. The true cumulative visual impact on my property and dwelling has not been represented accurately in the report. No noise impact study has been done and needs to be as the rating is likely to be similar to NAD-5. I had requested verbally that this be done but it has not happened. Our property is our culture, our business, our place and it will be changed completely by this development.

My son is a musician. He uses our country, our space, as both inspiration and for his music. He records the sounds produced there. They make part of his production. The dwelling will house his recording studio. None of this has been taken into account. It will impact directly only. My sister is an Aboriginal artist. She recently completed her doctorate using art created on our property on her country, the lands of the Kamilaroi people. It is her muse. This will now be

destroyed and again this connection has not been taken into account. I do not see any mention of connection to country for Aboriginal people in the report.

5 I also own Lot 1 DP11399717. This carries a building entitlement. A photo montage was created by the proponent. The proponent knows a DA will be submitted. The proponent knows the location of the dwelling. This needs to be taken into consideration in relation to visual impact, has not been.

10 Suggestions were put forward by ENGIE about moving the location of the dwelling. Their suggestions have completely disregarded council by-laws in relation to location of a dwelling and where they can be and cannot be located.

15 A simplistic solution without any real understanding or research regarding legalities. The location of the proposed dwelling is about the view. I'm the principal of Quirindi High School. I travel Lindsays Gap Road, the school buses travel every day to the highway. This is a dangerous route currently with logging traffic and there have been a number of accidents that have I witnessed throughout 2023. The school bus does a high school and a primary school run twice per day. It starts at 7 am and finishes around 8.30. Approval of this project will genuinely  
20 place the lives of our children at risk.

I refer to page 55.178 where the proponents state they will reduce movements during this time as far as possible. This leaves it up to the proponent's discretion and places the lives of our children in their hands. Too much risk. A definitive "no  
25 travel of oversize, overmass vehicles" needs to be implemented for any school bus travel times. They should not be on the road with our school children.

30 As an Aboriginal person I believe the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report is lacking. It needs to be completed again, this time thoroughly. Which means walking the entire site from one end to the other. This did not happen.

35 Inspecting the micro-locations of every proposed turbine, cable digging and substantial locations as well as any proposed roads. As a member of the Nungaroo Lands Council and board, whilst I do not speak on their behalf on this occasion, I know there is no agreement in place with the Nungaroo Lands Council.

40 Ultimately I would ask that all the above requests be implemented, but that this project be denied its consent in its entirety. It is not the place for a development of this type. Thank you.

**MS SYKES:** Do you have any questions? No, thank you. Thank you very much, Ian. Our next speaker is Skye Sylvester, who I believe is dialling in by phone. Skye, do we have you?

45 **MS SYLVESTER:** Hi, yeah.

**MS SYKES:** Hi, Skye, we're good to go.

**MS SYLVESTER:** Thank you.

**MS SYKES:** Thank you.

5

**MS SYLVESTER:** All right. I'm Skye Sylvester, my family own Wombramurra Station, approximately 12,000 acres in the (audio distortion) located in (audio distortion). As part of my (audio distortion) -

10 **MS SYKES:** Skye, Skye -

**MS SYLVESTER:** Yeah.

15 **MS SYKES:** I'm not sure if you can hear me. It's a little bit patchy. If you could speak a little bit slower.

**MS SYLVESTER:** Okay, no worries.

**MS SYKES:** Thank you.

20

**MS SYLVESTER:** As a part of my (audio distortion) I'm keen to -

**MS SYKES:** Skye -

25 **MS SYLVESTER:** Yeah.

**MS SYKES:** I'm very sorry but we're having a little bit of trouble hearing you.

**MS GRANT:** Ask her to take it off speaker.

30

**MS SYKES:** Okay. Skye, could we ask you to take your phone off speaker? Are you okay, Skye? Skye, could you possibly take your phone off speaker and it might be a little easier to hear you. We're getting a little bit of relay.

35 **MS SYLVESTER:** Yeah, no problem.

**MS SYKES:** Try again.

**MS SYLVESTER:** Yes, sorry. Is that better?

40

**MS SYKES:** That is a lot better, thank you very much, Skye. If we could start from the beginning that would be very helpful.

45 **MS SYLVESTER:** Okay, thank you. I'm Skye Sylvester. My family own Wombramurra Station which is approximately 12,000 acres in the Head of Peel Road located at [REDACTED]. As part of my family's succession plan I'm keen to take on a section of our property that is approximately 940 hectares on

a separate title located in the south-western corner of our property, Wombramurra Station. This section was originally owned by my grandfather and thus has special significance to me.

5 There is a preliminary DA approved on this portion of land and I have chosen a house site to maximise the views and unique location. The dwelling location will be within 2 kilometres of a number of turbines, with the closest turbine six and 12. No visual or noise assessments have been carried out from this location and I would like to draw attention to the DP assessment recommendations to the IPC  
10 section 119.

As discussed earlier, although there is possibility of future dwellings, there is warrant a lower rating due to the uncertain nature and the ability of them to be designed, sited and orientated to avoid or reduce impact.

15 Also section 120, the potential future dwellings located could be beyond 2 kilometres of the turbines and are orientated away from the project to minimise visual impacts and in locations where the noise criteria could be met. I object to these statements as the project does not have approval and we should not be  
20 restricted to build on sites that do not add maximum value and enjoyment of our land.

This section of property borders the development footprint of the proposed wind farm and the proposed Western Connector track is located very close to our  
25 boundary, and I have concerns regarding construction of this structure and how it will impact our property due to the lack of engineering related to the constructability of the track to transport oversized overmass vehicles in this type of terrain.

30 Tamworth Regional Council have illustrated the difficulty of construction and specialist engineering required and this has highlighted my concern. Construction has the potential to result in large areas of erosion, such as so much of the designated and engineering details of construction of these internal access roads have not been undertaken.

35 Impact including increased erosion, diversion of water flows, dust, noise and visual impacts on adjoining non-associated landholders such as my family could be enormous. I also require - I also request that the Commissioner refer to the report provided by the DPE commissioned by David Piccolo, especially  
40 appendage B, which is an indication of the engineering required to construct turbines in an area greater than 30 per cent slope. Noting that 17 of the 64 turbines occur in a terrain existing slope greater than 20 per cent and five of the 64 in terrain steeper than 30.

45 The report - wind turbine six and 12 are two such turbines and are close to the boundary of our property, especially six which is located within 81 metres and has

very limited ability to be micro-sited. Both these turbines should be removed from the project.

5 The report prepared by David Piccolo also stated 30 per cent of access tracks allocated in the area of greater than 30 per cent slope and this includes almost half the proposed Transverse Track. The consequence of engineering to manage this will result in high visual impact that will permanently scar the ridge line and have not been assessed as a part of the project.

10 The IPC Commissioners need to take this into account and I understand they have seen some of these areas on their site visits. The Department of Planning and Environment advise removal of turbines nine to 11 due to the visual impact of multi non-associated dwellings, that approved preliminary developments, applications on our property adds weight to these recommendations.

15 As part of any development consequence visual and noise studies need to be carried out from these DPA locations and request taken to reduce or prevent any identified impacts. This project should not be approved as it is not located in a Renewable Energy Zone. An approval would undermine confidence of our rural  
20 communities in the process and policies governments are putting in place, in relation to the roll out of renewable projects to meet clean energy targets.

25 This program also lacks social licence as it is - been clearly demonstrated on more than three occasions local majorities do not support this project and multi-national overseas-based companies should not be allowed to threaten the sensitive environments in Australia. The question remains when is green energy truly green? Thank you.

30 **MS SYKES:** Thank you. Thank you very much, Skye for your submission. Did have you a question - we just had one question.

35 **MS GRANT:** Skye, you mentioned there was a preliminary DA for the house that you're looking to construct. What do you mean by a preliminary DA? What are you referring to there?

**MS SYLVESTER:** We have a site picked out for where I'll potentially build a house in the future, and it has gone through and been approved, the site where I would like to build.

40 **MS GRANT:** Approved by council - council, so it's an approved DA or -

**MS SYLVESTER:** Yeah.

45 **MS GRANT:** Okay, are you able to provide details of that with your submission following today, just so that we've got accurate record of that, please?

**MS SYLVESTER:** Yes, no worries.

**MS GRANT:** And the other question I had, you said it was turbine 2, I think you said was 80 metres from your site?

5 **MS SYLVESTER:** Turbine 6.

**MS GRANT:** Sorry, 6 and then the other one you referred to, what number was that?

10 **MS SYLVESTER:** 12.

**MS GRANT:** 12. Okay. Thank you.

**MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, Skye.

15

**MS SYLVESTER:** No worries, thank you.

**MS SYKES:** Our next speaker is John Sylvester.

20 **MR SYLVESTER:** Commissioners, thank you. Yes, John Sylvester. I live at Wombramurra Station up the Head of Peel Road. Closer? All good. I live at Wombramurra Station up the Head of Peel Road. We live - I'm very privileged to live in a magnificent valley. Everybody that visits us - visits us comments  
25 on - they say it's probably one of the most beautiful places they've ever seen. This project, will we boundary it for 20 kilometres. It is within 80 metres of our boundary and a lot of the turbines are within a kilometre to two kilometres of our boundary. Better get the glasses out.

30 We have not had a neighbourhood agreement and we will not be signing a neighbourhood agreement with the way we've been treated by ENGIE over the last five to six years. The impact on our family and our business operations and general wellbeing for the past five years is a prime example of the renewable projects in wrong locations and bad sites. Being outside the Renewable Energy Zone is not fair to force - force developments on such a community and regions  
35 that clearly do not want it.

The maps include there - recent wind energy guidelines demonstrates there are many more projects in a lot more friendly environments and better environments to build around the state. As we see with Tamworth Council having already 20  
40 renewable projects on the go and this is increasing on a - on a fairly regular basis, but this is the only project that they actually reject and they've put a lot of time and effort into researching this. This is not just something that they've passed by. I commend the Tamworth Council on the work that they've done in the research.

45 Our community communication with the DPE over the past five years we were told no access means no project. We still don't have an access point on this project, so it should not be approved. I appeal to the Commissioners to demonstrate their

commitment to ensuring regional communities and rural landholders are treated fairly by rejecting this project on basis - on one of these bases of no access.

5 The EIS included in the assessment of the soils concluded that there is high erosion risk in this site in areas with slopes greater than 20 per cent, or where concentrated flows occur. The head of this valley and up on the range can get huge downfalls in a very short period of time. It's possible to get two to three hundred millimetres over a few hours up there. I don't believe that this has been calculated in any of their assessments.

10 The concentration of water off towers, hardstands and gravel roads will be enormous in those events. Erosion and sedimentation of gullies and the river below - yes, this is a very soft and friable soil and there are already dozens of landslips in the area. In 2022 alone, which was quite a wet year, I counted over 20  
15 new landslips in the wind farm footprint as viewed from our property. Some of these landslips are massive and there's no way that any of the engineering that they've come up with can stop this happening.

I think its regulation - table 17, talking about the access of water for the  
20 construction of the turbine - they need 55 megalitres of water. This should not be taken from anywhere in the Peel River or their tributaries and it should not be taken from bores that are fit for stock and domestic on the major landholders. They have to - need to get that water from somewhere else. Nundle and Tamworth run into big water problems and this is just going to add another dimension to that,  
25 that should not happen.

Again, the Aboriginal - and I agree wholeheartedly with Ian Worley about the Aboriginal and heritage assessments - they've identified eight sites, three isolated  
30 finds, four artefacts, one potential archaeological deposit and most of these sites were of low significance except for one pad and two artefacts scatters.

In our experience out there, and with people we've had working out there of Aboriginal descent, they are saying there is a massive amount of Aboriginal activity in the area, and the other thing we've seen is there seems to be a very high  
35 concentration of Aboriginal artefacts and areas, especially on Wombramura Creek, which hasn't even been assessed yet which is the new access point that they are trying to get and there is no assessment at all. Yet we are trying to make a decision on things that have not been done.

40 I think there's going to be a massive bushfire risk. The assessment done by ENGIE and in their proposal is a cut and paste from most - from some areas that mostly are nothing like what we see up the head of the creek and on the mountain range. The wind farm will have a huge impact to fight fires in this really high fire-prone area and on our ability, especially from the air - especially from the air, which is  
45 one of the main ways to control fires on these very steep slopes.

With the turbines being situated on top of the range and the ridge line there will be a wide corridor where aeroplanes and helicopters will not be able to operate sideways, which then drops you down three to four hundred metres, so in the main lightning strike zone, as history tells us with all the fires we have fought up there and got to, it's - a lot of them are inaccessible areas and the best way and the quickest way to get at it is either helicopters or planes. And speaking to pilots who operate in that, they would not operate in that area.

The other part is you've got the high voltage power lines, again they cannot operate near high voltage power lines and even trucks and ground rigs. Ground trucks can't operate underneath high voltage power lines, so it is going to present a huge risk of fire that could devastate that very pristine bit of country up at Ben Halls Gap Nature Reserve which has been able to be protected astoundingly over the last - I can't remember the last time it was burnt.

Even the DPE recognises that the current guidelines are inadequate for the purpose of wind and solar and all this sort of stuff. It is a changing environment. But at the moment we are still in the process and they're in the process of changing them. But if this project goes ahead it will be just bad luck for us. We'll have to stick to the old guidelines from back in 2013 or whatever it is where there was very little wind energy in Australia. So it's such a changing space and we're running at this stuff so hard that the Department of Planning are having trouble keeping up with what is right and what is wrong and what is fair.

There are so many flaws in this project it is hard to believe how it has got this far. We have been fighting - but we are fighting a multi-billion-dollar foreign-owned company. I believe this project will have a huge impact personally on our property and to the community. It will take away these beautiful valleys and the pristine nature of what we have. The effect on our property, I believe, will have a massive devaluation. There's no way in the world that we would be living - if we knew there was going to be a wind farm there we would not have bought it.

We look straight out of our house and we look straight at the ridge line and that's what we like to look at. ENGIE is telling us we only have to plant two or three trees and within 10 years we won't be able to see the turbines. So it's a bit like going to the beach and buying a house and building a 12 foot wall so you can't look at the ocean.

But all these assessments are done from the house. We've spent all day every day in paddocks, so every day of the rest of my life, if this project goes ahead I will have to look at wind turbines. Is that 10 minutes? Righto. I'll finish.

I've lived through many natural disasters in my life, fires, floods droughts but you can always manage to pull through them. The last five or six years has been the hardest of my life. It's something we're trying to build, but when you see - confront projects like this, when they take - when they've taken all our - all our hands have been tied by the developers against the greed and power of a few

and the money train that follows this. Please don't be the rubber stamp. Help this community to say no to this destructive project.

5 **MS SYKES:** John, thank you very much for your submission, and also for having us on your site - your location yesterday. It was a pleasure to visit your property and get context of the locality and some of the points that you've raised, so thank you very much. So our next speaker is Selena Sylvester.

10 **MS SYLVESTER:** I'd like to thank the Commission for the opportunity to present today. I'm Selena Sylvester. Our family home is in NAD-33, Wombramurra Station, 504 Head of Peel Road. Along with my husband, John, I'm the director of our family farming business, Sylvester Cattle Company and our children work in the business, alongside nine valued employees.

15 We purchased Wombramurra Station probably - over 20 years ago after a long and thorough search through New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria to find the right place. The unique fertile valley that runs along Peel River surrounded by the majestic ridge line which is habitat to countless and varied flora and fauna attracted us to the property. The area was quiet and peaceful, the night sky was  
20 amazing. Water was a feature of the property and the size allowed future subdivision with magnificent views for house sites.

The Hills of Gold Wind Farm proposal changes all this. I'd like draw attention to section 233 of the DPE assessment where the Department acknowledges that the  
25 assessment process has been protracted, very difficult due to the inherent site constraints, substantial community opposition, major amendments to the project, additional exhibitions, delays in information by the Applicant. Surely this is a project which is sited in the wrong location.

30 Before I continue I would also like to draw attention to the New South Wales map of wind resources found in the current draft guidelines which clearly demonstrates the many potential locations to satisfy the transition to renewable energy.

35 At the Bush Summit in Tamworth August 2023 I met with the Prime Minister and discussed the Hills of Gold Wind Farm. He stated rural communities like ours need support and our views need to be recognised and encouraged. He encouraged me to follow up with the AIC review which I attended in Tamworth and discussed at length the issues of this project and the ways the process could be improved with Andrew Dyer, the Commissioner.

40 The Prime Minister also facilitated a meeting with the Minister For the Environment and Water and passed my correspondence to the Minister for Climate Change and Energy. After numerous attempts on my behalf and others we are still waiting for these meetings to be confirmed.

45 The visual and noise studies carried out by the proponent from our house inadequately addressed the impacts on our residence and suggested using

5 vegetation for screening is unsuitable. We have the most visually impacted non-associated dwelling in the project, being three sectors of 60 degrees exposure. Section 117 DPA assessment. However, as we are recorded as 5.51 kilometres from the closest turbine or outside the blue line, this means that we don't seem to matter.

10 As stated in the report commissioned by the DPE we will be likely to see all the turbines from different areas of our property and over 30 from our residence. Our night sky will be polluted by 28 turbines that require lighting. As in line with DPA recommendations, we requested removal - we request removals of turbines 53 to 63 and nine, 10 and 11 as a minimum.

15 We also have two other residents - residents on our property that currently have transit DAs in place and houses are waiting for DA approval. I will - Skye gets - it's slightly confusing because there is so much going on on our place, we have preliminary DAs in place on two sections. We have transit DAs awaiting DA approvals, so we've actually got another four houses ready to build as soon as we get the applications approved.

20 So these residents - the residence that we currently have on site which the commission saw yesterday will be within 5 kilometres of a number of turbines and no visual or noise impacts have been assessed on those and they will both be highly impacted.

25 We request photo montages, wire frames and noise assessments to be carried out from these sites and again removal of turbines 53 to 63 and nine to 11 to try some sort of mitigation for these sites.

30 As noted on the map, which I don't think we have, this is just a slide showing the type of exposure that has been represented of our site, NAD-33. As noted on the map, we also have preliminary DAs in place for the two blocks on Wombramurra that the Commissioners have heard about from Skye and William in their presentations.

35 One of these locations will be 1.5 kilometres from the closest turbine and extremely close to the Transverse Track. The other will be a similar distance from the turbines. This further backs up our request for the removal of turbines 53 to 63 and nine to 11 in addition wind turbines six, wind turbine 12, wind turbine 22, 40 wind turbine 39 and wind turbine 40. I agree with the DPE's comments in the assessment report recommendations to the IPC, turbines dominate the landscape at NAD-33, our home.

The visual assessment bulletin states a development:

45 "Should not dominate the existing visual catchment."

However, I totally disagree with the information in table 11 stating vegetation screening could be adequate mitigation, which is contraindicated by advice given by the bushfire safety table in 17, which states that the RAF has grave concerns about bushfire risks by increasing vegetation screening.

5

The only satisfactory outcome in our situation is removal of all turbines, and also this would address our concerns of noise impacts to all our dwellings that have not been evaluated or adequately addressed. As landholders on both sides of the Head of Peel Road, a major concern to us is the use of Head of Peel Road and the right of carriageway granted over Kirks Road.

10

In the assessment report Head of Peel Road is noted as an emergency access only and we have sought clarification, both from the DPE and the proponent regarding this. We have not received any confirmation detailing what this has meant. We would like the Commissioners to look further into this and happy to grant access for right of carriageway for emergency services only, which includes fire, police and ambulance, but this does not extend to any service vehicle as part of the proposed site.

15

20

Being a veterinarian, protection of threatened and endangered species, plus everyday animal welfare are a huge concern to me. The mitigation process suggested by the proponent, I feel are totally inadequate, given the sensitive location of this project.

25

It is difficult to train native animals to use wildlife corridors as we do pedestrian crossings. The way animals learn is through experience, and this could often result in misadventure with lethal consequences. I agree with the DPE recommendations for removals of turbine 24, 28 and 42 and would like to add turbine 39 for reduction of biodiversity impacts.

30

I question section 219 in the assessment report:

"The project would generate credit liability of 5,777 ecosystem credits and 9,362 species credits requiring offset under the biodiversity offset."

35

This appears to be associated with the 184 hectares of clearing required for the project as stated in the EPA assessment. I cannot find where the biodiversity offset credits, which are noted in the report, and on the ENGIE website, as being associated with unauthorised land clearing that has already occurred within the project footprint are accounted for and I ask the commission to seek clarity on this arrangement so that transparent, honest information can be presented to the community.

40

45

I also confer with the restriction of construction to standard hours on Monday to Friday and no construction on the weekend for social-economic reasons. We're not prepared to sign any neighbourhood agreement in relation to this project as we feel

that the impacts of all the unidentified risks are too great. This project should not be approved on policy grounds.

5 Our Parliament and State's planning authorities are already well aware of the community outrage caused by poorly considered and inappropriately sited renewable energy projects. This is such a project. The establishment and delineation of specific RE Zone is a welcome step in addressing the harm which badly planned RE projects have caused and are still causing to roll out the policies designed to reduce our carbon footprint.

10 In this case the IPC must ask itself, what purpose does a designated RE Zone serve if an RE projects are supported outside these zones by the very authorities which have created them?

15 Renewable energy projects that are proposed to be developed outside clearly designated DE Zones as here produce at least three unwelcome consequences. They squander community goodwill and perpetuate outrage; they create precedence which undermine the message of government that listen to it and respond appropriately to communities that are called upon to bear the brunt of sometimes very intrusive infrastructure needed to create - to reduce carbon emissions for the wider benefit. They endanger the trust which we all place in orderly planning and development in New South Wales, as administered by the bodies, including the IPC.

25 RE projects - renewable energy projects which seek consent outside REZ zones do not warrant the support or encouragement of our planning authorities.

30 What if the IPC, nonetheless, considers that this project should be approved outside the New England REZ? While we are opposed to this project for these reasons already submitted and repeat here today, if the IPC is nonetheless minded to grant the process approval it should only do so on the basis that it is conditioned as following: Deferred commencement condition - consent for the project shall not operate unless and until the Applicant for consent has demonstrated that it has a binding agreements in place for all access routes traversing any private land, including private roads to and from the project site for construction, operation and maintenance of project works; operative conditions - if any works are carried out by or on behalf of the consent holder which result in or are likely to result in any of the impacts listed below, or on which affected land adjoining the project site the consent holder must take immediate steps to avoid or mitigate these impacts; rehabilitation - repair or remediate the land so affected or compensated affected landholders where avoidance mitigation and other measures are inadequate. Intrusive noise of dwellings, excessive dirt, dust, loss of access to upstream water, soil erosion, weed infestation, fires of any kind, stock disease transmission, breaches of biosecurity plans and or damage to any property improvements.

45 Where any land neighbouring the project development site has dwellings or approved dwellings located on it and the construction, operation or maintenance of

the approved project works causes any adverse amenity impacts or results in diminution of the value of the land by more than 20 per cent as assessed by a registered valuer the holder of the approval of the project shall comply with any request by the affected landholder for acquisition of the neighbouring property conformably with the voluntary - and I stress voluntary - land acquisition process under the State Government voluntary land acquisition planning and mitigation. And I would like to present to the commission a copy of my submission.

**MS SYKES:** Thank you very much. Thank you very much for preparing your submission. I think if we could actually hand that over to the commission staff that would be fantastic. Thank you. Our next speaker is Elizabeth Watts.

**MS WATTS:** Thank you, Commissioners.

**MS SYKES:** She is on the phone.

**MS WATTS:** Can I confirm that you can hear me?

**MS SYKES:** Yes, we can hear you. Thank you, Elizabeth.

**MS WATTS:** Thanks very much and I think there are some slides which I'm sure the technicians will bring to the screen. Thanks for your time today and thank you also to the Commissioners for visiting our property yesterday. It was much appreciated. My name is Liz Watts, I'm an owner along with my husband Graeme Watts of non-associated dwelling 69, address is 281 Mountain View Road.

I wanted to focus my presentation today and if it's possible to bring the slides up that would be great on the visual impact from our property. As the Commissioners will have noted on visiting the site yesterday, the proposed project really dominates the skyline and we have built our property to maximise the spectacular views that we have from that skyline.

We support removal of turbine 24, which is the closest turbine situated next - in the project next to our property. We also support removal of turbines 9, 10, 11 and 28 for reasons of visual impact. But what we are also requesting is that the commission looks at the removal of turbines 16, 18, 20, 21, 25 and 26, which represent a significant visual impact for our property.

You will note in the landscape and visual assessment which was appendix G to the submission documents that our property was regarded as having a moderate impact on the basis of vegetative screening. If you can go to the next slide, what I think is important to note is that that vegetative screening is not reasonable nor feasible. The proposed site of the screening is directly under a power line.

We have - there is a 10 metre limitation for tree planting around a power line. Additionally there is a Telstra line which runs underground through our house yard and there's also a really steep fall-off towards the existing tree line. There

really is no feasible zone for planting that would allow for the height of tree that would be necessary to screen the visual impact.

5 As the Commissioners will have noted from viewing our property yesterday, we would need to plant trees of inordinate size, much greater than anything else that grows in the area, on rock against the requirements of the utility infrastructure that is situated on the property, as well as in direct contravention of the bushfire regulations which require us to avoid planting within 100 metres of our house.

10 For all of those reasons the proposed mitigation proposed by the proponent is not reasonable, nor feasible, and therefore we reject that the visual impact for our property is moderate and would instead say it is high and significant.

I do also want to touch on bushfire and if you could just move to the next slide.  
15 Thank you. This image was taken in the Black Summer, so it was on 30 December 2019 and it was taken from the verandah of our house, just by our master bedroom, and it shows part of a five-kilometre wall of fire which consumed the range directly below where the substation is located in the project site, and in fact encroached upon our house yard.

20 We're really concerned about the effect that the project will have on the ability of the Rural Fire Service to deploy aviation techniques to fight fires. There were helicopters and planes seeking to control this fire front back in 2019, and I think what we are also additionally concerned about and share the concerns noted in the  
25 RFSs submission is that having substation and turbine infrastructure up on a hill where we know that lightning strike can cause a fire at any time, particularly in conditions of drought.

The key, I guess, request from our submission or from my submission is to  
30 reiterate the removal of an additional six turbines from the southern end of the project area because of significant visual impact for our own property, the fact that it's not reasonable or feasible to mitigate that through vegetative screening, and also because it presents an increased risk and impact of bushfire, but what I would also add to that specific request is, and I think I will reiterate what you have heard  
35 from many speakers today, is that I think this issue around the proponent's suggested mitigation really is a great exemplar of the inadequacy of the consultation and engagement that the proponent has had, particularly for those on the southern side of the range.

40 There has been no engagement prior to the EIS by ENGIE. There's been no noise or vibration testing conducted on the southern side of the range, nor water or soil impact assessments done for the Isis and Hunter catchment. This does not feel like a just process. It does not feel like a just transition to renewable energy, and it is definitely our request that the Commissioners seriously consider the rejection of  
45 this proposal on the basis that the proponent has not met many of the process requirements and that this is ultimately an unsuitable site for renewable energy project of this scale. Thank you for your time. I know it's been a long day.

5 **MS SYKES:** Thank you very much, Elizabeth, for preparing your submission and also the opportunity to visit your particular location yesterday as well at your residence. Our next - our final speaker for today is Natasha Soonchild. She is also online? Do we have Natasha Soonchild? Is she on the phone? Wonderful.

**MS SOONCHILD:** Hello, can you hear me?

10 **MS SYKES:** Yes we can. Thank you very much.

**MS SOONCHILD:** Brilliant, thank you. I grew up in Nundle and returned in 2017 to live here and start a small artistic business which operates as a gallery and studio on the weekends. My business, Stormcrow Studio, is based in what was originally the village butcher shop, a heritage building in the heart of the village.

15 Along with most businesses in the village centre I rely significantly on the healthy tourist industry Nundle is known for. The village offers a unique experience of gold mining heritage and a feel of old Australia, alongside a strong connection to country and landscape. All this is being put into jeopardy by this proposal and I can only summarise the industrialisation of our landscape both on the ridge line and within the village confines will have a devastating long-term and permanent effect on my business, my livelihood and my wellbeing.

25 I do not think the Applicant or the Department have accurately depicted the cultural significance Nundle and Hanging Rock holds regionally and nationally. We are not a tiny speck on the map of Australia that no-one has heard of. We are a much-visited, much-loved destination that holds significant meaning to those people who have chosen to call it home and for those who chose to visit it time and again.

30 Hanging Rock has long been called Tamworth's Katoomba, first described as such in a report dating from 1889 describing the significant beauty of our vistas. In other parts of the world and Australia authorities have legislated against wind farms in areas of high scenic beauty and environmental sensitivity.

35 I returned to Nundle to escape an industrialised environment, to feed my creative life and to actively choose to be connected to an environment that inspires my art and my sense of belonging and place. What ENGIE is proposing to do to our landscape is prioritise the drive for renewables at any cost, even if that means enacting harm to the land, skies, waterways and community.

40 In their presentation to the IPC ENGIE has concluded that the DPHI overstates visual impact and asserts that the Department does not balance visual impact against the broader public interest in accordance with existing case law.

45 I raise this as I believe it's important to acknowledge there is also existing case law supporting and protecting a community and individual's right to amenity, and this

case law seeks to articulate and enshrine the definition of amenity in relation to proposed developments within a community.

5 To weigh the visual impact of this project against broader public interest truly seeks to undervalue, negate and ignore the value, meaning and amenity we hold for this place. A project of this scale would be devastating to my amenity. As a community we have consistently demonstrated our objection to this proposal, evidenced by the statistics.

10 This project does not have social licence. If we are talking about broader public interest, surely there is also compelling public interest in preserving our cultural and environmental heritage, protecting our endangered species and preserving our wild and semi-wild spaces for future generations.

15 I believe Nundle and Hanging Rock are on par with Hill End, inasmuch as meeting the values of a conservation area. We hold national cultural significance due to our aesthetic, historic, scientific and social value to past, present and future generations of Australians and we deserve to have these assets protected.  
20 Destroying our environment and heritage in the name of saving our environment is an absurd and sad contradiction we have a chance to correct.

I believe the Department has actually underrepresented the impact this proposal will have to our amenity. I believe they have been remiss in sanctioning the transport route both from the ridge line and through our villages. There are no  
25 protections for the character of Nundle and Hanging Rock but we are effectively being asked to accept the redefinition of our village and our lives as we know they.

30 This proposal is clearly not appropriately located. The DPHIs assessment asks us to accept the impacts of 47 huge industrial turbines on a picturesque ridge line. It asks us to accept turbines neighbouring Ben Halls Gap Nature Reserve home to critically endangered species. It asks us to accept cashed offset losing these environments, impacts to biodiverse habitats, red aviation lights - light  
35 illuminating our dark night skies, pollution to waterways, clearing of koala habitat, the industrialisation of our roads and character of our villages and landscape. No amount of money offered could ameliorate what has already been done to this community and what will be done to this community if this project goes ahead.

40 The way we value our landscape, our lifestyles, the amenity of our landscape and community, both tangible and intangible, should be the benchmark by which this project's appropriateness is assessed. In opposing this project and the DPHIs recommendations I'm seeking to preserve our native flora and fauna habitats, our close-knit community, the tranquillity that's afforded in such landscape, the  
45 livelihoods of many, our future water security, our unique heritage features and the beautiful unpolluted dark night skies.

Our landscape is not an inanimate backdrop to important human activity, it is a living breathing entity that is much larger than this proposal or the DPHIs assessment can ever attempt to fathom. I believe I stand on the right side of the equation when I request that the IPC rejects the Hills of Gold Wind Farm proposal. Thank you.

**MS SYKES:** Do you have any questions? Do you have a question? Natasha, we just have a question from Commissioner Grant.

**MS GRANT:** Sorry. Thank you for that. You mentioned some case law that you are referring to that enshrine the definition of amenity for community. Is that something that you could perhaps reference in your submission to us, or is it an easy case reference you could give now? Whatever is easiest -

**MS SOONCHILD:** No, it's actually quite -

**MS GRANT:** - for you.

**MS SOONCHILD:** No, it's actually quite - it's actually quite detailed and I did wish to read it out during this, but I can certainly include it in my submission.

**MS GRANT:** Perfect, thank you very much.

**MS SOONCHILD:** Thank you.

**MS SYKES:** Well, thank you very much, Natasha, for your submission today.

Well, thank you, everybody. That brings us to the end of day one of this public meeting. Thank you to everyone who presented today for your thoughtful presentations. A transcript of today's proceedings will be made available on our website in the coming week.

I just wanted to remind everyone that the commission will accept written submissions on the Hills of Gold Wind Farm project up until 5 pm Monday 12 February. It is particularly helpful for us if you can comment in your submissions at this stage on the assessment report for this project prepared by the Department, and the associated recommended conditions as well.

You can submit your comments using the Make a Submission portal on our website or by email or by post. We will be back tomorrow morning at 10 am for day two proceedings. Thank you for your company today and from all of us at the commission enjoy your evening. Good night.

**<THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 7.07 PM**

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