

Received 16/01/2023

Name: Mike Faulkner



11TH January, 2023

Director – Energy Assessments, Development Assessment

Department of Planning and Environment

Locked Bag 5022

PARRAMATTA NSW 2124

Reference: Winterbourne Wind Farm SSD – 10471

I OBJECT to the Winterbourne Wind Farm development.

- I declare that I have not made any reportable political donations in the previous 2 yrs.
- I acknowledge and accept the Department's disclaimer and declaration.

The reason for my position stated above is the following:

Our names are Mike & Sheila Faulkner and we have lived in Walcha for 48 years. We came to Walcha from Sydney and also a period of living overseas (Canada/Switzerland). Walcha is a vibrant rural community which is now in danger of being destroyed (perhaps along with the value of our local assets) by the introduction of wind and solar farms) on productive rural land.

It is hard to understand why these towers need to be situated on productive land, when there are huge amounts of native forests on the ranges. Put the towers in the National parks and run the power underground.

During our time we leased a rural property at Jerry's Plains (near Singleton) from the mines. The power lines ran across that property and the locals advised us strongly not to place breeding stock under the power lines. They asserted that deformed progeny would result. Walcha is a major beef and sheep breeding area, and many parts will be destroyed.

Also, I was for many years a general aviation pilot holding an instrument rating. At 230 metres (756 feet) these towers are an aviation risk without doubt – whether over pasture land or national parks. The tops of the towers would be in low cloud and the flashing lights obscured. Walcha does suffer a lot of low cloud, especially winter.

Otherwise, we are in full support of the publications by "VoiceforWalcha". The E.I.S is a SHAM and window dresses the facts.

Kind Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Faulkner'.

Mike Faulkner

Wrong place. Wrong size. Wrong developer.

✗ **Poor Consultation Processes**

Both the Non-Indigenous and Indigenous Communities have been very poorly consulted with by the Developer. The Community has not been afforded sufficient information flow for what could be a game changing development for Walcha. A development that has potentially a 62 years project life.

✗ **Poor Site Selection**

The Developer has failed with statutory obligations to consider feasible alternatives to the site. The site selection and the proposed sizing of the site at 700MW unfairly intensifies impact on a small rural community like Walcha. It is totally inconsistent with any strategic land use planning and against the interests maintaining high quality agricultural land.

✗ **High Ecological Impact**

Due to construction against the unique and beautiful Oxley Wild Rivers National park, part of the World Heritage Gondwana Rain Forests. Concerns with this proximity relate to construction run-off directly impacting the Park and the Macleay Catchment and River itself. Diminished capacity to deploy aerial support to fight fires, Destruction of wildlife corridors into and out of the Park.

✗ **High Health Impact**

From noise and vibration, blade flicker and (during construction) dust inhalation.

✗ **Increased Cumulative Impact**

The size of the Project in the context of the other wind and solar projects which developers intend to be co-located in and around Walcha induce a significant cumulative or compounding effect on the Community including visual impact, noise, road congestion and road destruction.

✗ **Road works prior to, during and after construction**

Leading to extensive road user delays and stoppages. Our roads are simply not made for these vehicle weights, and this heavy traffic intensity. Roads will be heavily damaged, have shortened life and will need to be rebuilt on a large scale.

✗ **Traffic congestion impact**

Of trucks on the Oxley Highway during the 3-year construction period, with 288 trucks per day during the 11 months of peak construction. Unknown additional traffic carting gravel and water, as the developer does not yet know where this is coming from. This additional resource traffic is likely to dwarf the traffic noted in the current traffic report. Add to this outlook the cumulative impacts of tsunami.

✗ **Negative tourism impact**

With gigantic installed turbines sited against iconic visitor destinations and wilderness areas.

✗ **Significant Water Impact**

EIS suggests the requirement for 150 Megalitres. EIS also states 6ML for concrete foundations, but simple arithmetic of 20% of 750cu.m per foundation x 119 turbines gives 17.8ML. Similarly, dust suppression has been grossly understated using industry estimates. Vestas Project Director had earlier stated that 220ML of water will be required. This would be a considerable underestimate - realistic calculation would suggest a conservative 675ML is required.

✗ **Where is the water source?**

EIS suggests it will come from harvestable rights, bores in the area, farm dams or from Walcha council supply. The scale of this requirement is staggering - it will empty the Walcha storage dam, currently under construction, more than 2 times over. Put another way, it is 56,000 x 12,000L truck loads travelling on our roads.

✗ **Massive impact on the existing gravel resource**

Construction of 113km of road plus hardstands is estimated to require 850,000 Tonnes of road building gravel. For perspective, the Brooklyn gravel pit has a current annual license of 28,000 T. (3% of this total requirement). Assuming 22T truck and dog configuration, this is over 38,650 truck loads in total, with an unknown portion of this gravel coming into the project area. The EIS does not include the majority of these gravel and water truck movements in their assessment, as they do not know where this water and gravel is coming from. If the traffic movements estimated above are carried out over a 11-month period - this amounts to an additional 800 truck movements (allowing for both directions of travel) per day!

EIS Submissions due before
23rd January 2023

EIS Submissions due before
23rd January 2023

✗ **Reckless Biodiversity risk assessment**

The Developer has tabled an inaccurate, incomplete and somewhat erroneous report on the potential impacts to biodiversity values. This is particularly concerning given the immediate proximity to the UNESCO Gondwana Rainforests and the Wilderness associated with the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park. There are many examples of the paucity of their assessment response. Some of these include ...

Wedgetail Eagles and Raptors – being present and threatened by the Wind Turbines as they soar from the gorges into the Wind Turbine area. There is a high concentration of Eagles that exist on the edge of the gorge, where a large number of turbines are located. These birds are particularly prone to bird strike with Wind Turbines.

Loss of connectivity habitat – impacting wildlife corridors to the National Park. Most of the retained vegetation on farmland is on ridgelines that will be cleared to make way for 113km of roads, underground cabling and turbines, that are targeting those same ridgelines.

Loss of habitat for threatened species - loss of 207Ha of Koala and Greater Glider habitat. Turbine strikes with Endangered Birds (Little Eagle, Glossy Black Cockatoo and White Throated Needle Tail) and Bats, losing an important insect pest control in the ecosystem. Loss of the threatened Narrow leaved black peppermint and other threatened ecological communities.

✗ **Biodiversity Offset Scheme**

Project construction and operation is resulting in assessed destruction of native habitat, that is carrying a penalty and Ecosystem Credit payment of \$50,887,024 and Species Credits payment of \$13,431,558. Over \$64 Million in total. This is a destructive project by industry standards. The health of our natural ecology should not be for sale. You simply cannot re-create the 207 Ha of habitat that is being destroyed. This project is in the wrong place.

✗ **Economic Analysis**

With an estimated \$200/MWhr pricing, this project is likely to generate \$420 Million annually in energy sales. Lease agreements with Wind Farm hosts is likely to be around \$3.6M in total per year, and community fund \$0.75 Million per year. For damage to the environment, they will get the chequebook out and fix that for \$64 Million, once off, through Biodiversity Offset costs, (because threatened and endangered species will appreciate the money??) An off-shore turbine manufacturer and developer is taking advantage of our community and the environment, with little regard to the long term impacts to both.

✗ **Neighbour Benefit fund**

Neighbours to the project should be compensated, with no strings attached, for the effects of sound, flicker, flashing night lights, visual amenity, construction activity, loss of capital value etc that the development has imposed upon them. Neighbours who are impacted by this project should be compensated through a neighbour benefit fund. There should be no need to sign a Neighbour Agreement with confidentiality clauses and ongoing commitments. Neighbours are being coerced into signing contracts in order to get any form of compensation. The neighbour benefit fund, which was initially proposed by the developer, and recently scrapped, is the only fair course of action.

✗ **Diminished Aviation Services**

Spreading of fertilizer, seed and chemical under threat with Wind Turbine Generators creating a no-fly zone near rural airstrips, and low cloud conditions. National Parks also flag concerns with aerial wild dog baiting.

✗ **Increased bush fire control risk**

With WTG's creating no fly zone. Water collection from paddocks west of project area, while Oxley Wild Rivers NP is on the Eastern side of project area. We lose our most important aerial tools for gorge fire control. Of particular concern is the location of WTG's against the National Park "Strategic Fire Advantage Zone", critical to wildfire control.

✗ **Visual Impact**

119 Turbines, 230m high, a height not previously constructed in Australia. Compare to the largest project currently constructed in Australia (Oct 2022) – Coopers Gap in QLD, which has 3.63MW Turbines, to a height of 182m. Add the flashing White, or Red lighting and our night skyline is dramatically altered. Sugarloaf tower sits at a height of 47m for local perspective.

✗ **Inadequate Plan for Decommissioning**

The developer intends to avoid any contribution to a bond, until they decide this "might" be necessary when their first assessment occurs at 15 years of project life. No oversight, no arms length bond held by independent party, and no insurance against financial default. This is the perfect recipe for a "walk away".

✗ **Error ridden EIS**

Indicating an unprofessional and an incapable project developer. Early errors pointed out to the planning department have forced their hand into publishing corrections – *how many times can this occur before the EIS is totally dysfunctional?*



*We urge you to
make use of this
material to test
your ideas ...*

1. Scrutinise it, and fact check it against the EIS
2. Talk to us about any questions you have
3. Write and Submit your EIS submission NOW.

<https://voiceforwalcha.com/eis>

letters to the editor



The Wind of Change

Something needs clarification. Winterbourne Wind is not a "community-based project", it never has been. It has never had the support of the broader community and only benefits a few directly involved who stand to gain financially.

The proposed community fund is almost an insult when looking at the projected total revenue generated by the project.

Our family moved to the beautiful quiet town of Walcha in 2010 for a change of pace and to live an off-grid lifestyle. Many of our good Walcha friends are "blow-ins" as well. People who have started businesses in the area, work the land, enrich the community through artistic endeavours, volunteer in community organisations and send their kids to local schools.

Over the past twelve years we have made a conscious effort to run an environmentally sustainable agricultural business.

The majority of our electrical power requirements are generated on-farm through our stand-alone solar system.

We try our best to minimise any waste generated going into landfill.

We are truly concerned about the environment and try our best to do our part.

We were shocked to find out in 2020 that our farm would be located at the centre of the proposed Winterbourne wind project. If this goes ahead our serene home will be surrounded by dozens of 230m tall turbines (almost 4 times the height of the Sugarloaf tower), every one of these bird chomping monsters equipped with aviation beacon lights.

We have been kept in the dark about the scale and magnitude of the Winterbourne wind project by Walcha Energy and our involved neighbours. There still seems to be no accurate information available about exactly what will be going where (Turbines, Substations and Power lines).

Why was all of this planned in secret?

Why, at "5 minutes to midnight", do we still know so little?

In the meantime, we're battling our way through thousands of pages of EIS & appendices...

Due to our opposition to the wind farm there is now noticeable strain in the relationships with our neighbours (as most of them are in favour of the project given the huge financial benefit that will be coming their way once they become turbine hosts). The animosity seems unjust as all we are doing is trying to defend our way of life, our home and our investment.

At a recent community meeting we were told "our emotions don't matter as we're trying to save the planet here". What a laughable statement. Your new-found 'environmentalism' isn't fooling anyone. Do you recycle your waste? How big is your existing solar system? What else do you do to minimize your carbon footprint!

I realise that Australia needs to explore alternatives to coal fired power generation, however, proposing to build a wind farm of industrial proportions (one of the largest in the world) in such a small community is absolute insanity. It will destroy the flair of the town, damage our fragile ecosystem, ruin our already terrible roads, kill-off tourism... The negatives are almost endless.

If Walcha wants to do its bit towards a sustainable energy future why don't we look at the development of a local micro grid with a mix of solar and - if needed- smaller and less invasive vertical axis turbines and local battery storage. That way, we can meet our own energy demands and generate feasible electricity for our local community. Other towns are doing it already, so why can't we?

The project will also have a huge impact on tourism which is vital for Walcha's economy. Do people really think that a wind factory of industrial proportions will bring tourists to town? How many people drive out to Sapphire Wind Farm on a Sunday to gaze at the towers?

Do we really believe that those "400 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs through the construction period" will bring us 400 new families and help us repopulate Walcha? Will the 39 FTE jobs during Operation, including approx. 16 site - based jobs for the life of the project" entirely go to local contractors and tradespeople?

The divisiveness of this project is ruining our beautiful community.

Stef Cook