

17/01/23 Received

**NAME**

**ADDRESS** 8 Judith St, Armidale 2350  
**Walcha NSW 2354**

**13/01/2023**

**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 two years
- I acknowledge and accept the Department's disclaimer and declaration.

Submission to Walcha Wind Farm EIS

I have been directly associated with the Walcha district and its farming community for 56 years. My father purchased land there when I was 15. My children were raised in Walcha, my two sons both now have farming properties and young families and are heavily involved in the community. Although I moved to Armidale two years ago, Walcha and its future are close to my heart.

The inevitable collapse of the Walcha community is what saddens me most about the planned Winterbourne Wind Farm. Of course, it will not happen immediately, but it will happen, with the fractures already beginning to show. Previous threats such as droughts, bushfires, low commodity prices and even Covid, have brought people together, and have strengthened their ties. But not wind farms.

Why – the reasons are many and the issues that follow are not addressed by the EIS.

**FINANCIAL** – huge imbalances in the financial rewards to individuals of the community for hosting this Windfarm. They range from extremely high to negative, depending on where you live and what you own. They have little to do with earned reward and are veiled in secrecy. Some of the compensations that are generally known are paltry, such as the money offered to Council.

**FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE** – a small town cannot provide all the accommodation, services and transport needs suddenly required. So, locals suffer as they cannot afford the rising prices and the new competition from deep pockets of the international developers and State and Federal governments. Demand for road repair and maintenance will increase, with more roads and heavier usage, and without an adequate pool of money available to facilitate it. The Walcha Council has already considered applying for a massive rate increase to cope with the current backlog of roadworks.

**HOLLOWING OUT** - the town becomes a less desirable place to live. Accommodation for travellers is non-existent as temporary workers inhabit all the available rooms. Food outlets gear towards fast food, early morning takeaways and nightly dinners for the influx of workers. The town becomes a service depot. I visited Boorowa in SE NSW just before Christmas. The once prosperous small rural town, once very like Walcha, is now a sad shell of itself as the windfarms proliferate in the district.

**COMMUNITY HEALTH** – the physical health of people living in the district will be affected, there is ample research to make this a certainty. Audible noise and infrasound are a by-product of wind turbines. Just how much this will adversely affect residents and how many

will be forced to move, cannot be determined as the numbers and size of turbines is an evolving scenario. Comparisons and references to other windfarms with smaller turbines and less numbers of them, are irrelevant and misleading.

Second, the issue of contaminations of air, water, and soil by the breakdown of the epoxy resins that go into the making of the turbine blades has not been dealt with in the EIS. It has been side stepped, but bisphenols that are inevitably released as the blades wear down (let alone if they are buried at the end of their lives) are toxic. How much will be released, where it will go and where it will end up needs to be detailed and addressed.

Mental health – how do people cope with the impost on their community? The people are divided, some quickly have much more money and resources, some have less. One person is happy, their neighbour not. Long-time friends are at odds with one another. The traffic on the roads increase, some roads deteriorate badly and what is to be prioritized by the Walcha Council? There will be lots of new faces in town, others will quickly move away. Tradesmen and some services are no longer available. Within a few years the monster turbines are constantly in your view either far or near, something you might ignore, enjoy, hate or fear.

Community Services – a rural community relies on helicopters and light planes in emergencies. How will the disruption to these services be dealt with? Turbines can cause fires, either by spontaneous combustion, or storms, friction and lightning becoming involved. In times of long spells of dry weather or drought, the danger will be always in the background.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH – the natural landscape will be affected, and much of it adversely. Swathes of bushland, farmland and roadsides will be cleared for the turbine construction period, the ongoing maintenance, and the embedding of the transmission infrastructure. Experts disagree on the long-term effects of the blade rotation killing birds, insects, and bats, and the inevitable ecological imbalances that will evolve. The close proximity of the proposed windfarm to the National Park is a serious misjudgement by the developers.

INDUSTRIALISATION – with a massive influx of wind and solar projects, the farming community of Walcha will derive its wealth from land rent and land values. This new industry, renewable energy production, will dominate and primary production will take a back seat. When something has little relative financial value, like grass cover and livestock, (ie relative to income from land and turbine rent) it will deteriorate, it is inevitable. The Walcha region will no longer be valued and renowned for its cattle and sheep production, and the New England and indeed Australia, will be much poorer for this.

SECRECY – around nearly every aspect of the proposal. And landowners in the district induced to sign agreements or contracts which bind them for decades. Some people threatened with legal action if they discuss situations or object publicly. People reluctant to declare their views for fear of being ostracized.

COST OF DISMANTLING – this is not addressed, and it is certainly unclear to anyone involved. It is very likely that those who have benefitted most, financially, will have long gone. Who will, or what is in place, for when wind power generation is no longer economically feasible (subsidies gone, nuclear reliable and cheap, turbines degraded and too expensive to maintain, other renewable technologies)?

The people of Walcha have actually been able to vote on the Winterbourne Windfarm proposal for its community, and the results have been resoundingly against. I see Walcha people as not against renewables in general, but against this proposed development, it being unsuited to this town and community. Small towns do not usually have the resources to cope well with massive disruption. There have to be other solutions and other sites. Let

the proponents take their development plans to where they are wanted and appreciated. If it goes ahead in Winterbourne then real democracy is dead in this country; community consultation is a farce; money, power, politics and vested interests win.

Signature

*Janet Chilton*