



## HILLS OF GOLD WIND FARM APPROVED WITH STRICT CONDITIONS

9 September 2024

The NSW Independent Planning Commission has today approved a new 372 megawatt (MW) wind farm, located approximately 60 kilometres (km) southeast of Tamworth, near Nundle, Hanging Rock and Crawney, within the local government areas of Tamworth Regional, Upper Hunter Shire and Liverpool Plains Shire.

Hills of Gold Wind Farm Pty Ltd, owned by ENGIE Australia & New Zealand, originally sought consent to develop a 390 MW wind farm with 64 turbines.

The Hills of Gold Wind Farm (SSD 9679) as approved by the Commission has 62 turbines, a 100 MW battery energy storage system, 330 kilovolt transmission line and other associated ancillary infrastructure. This State significant development is expected to create up to 211 construction jobs and 28 operational jobs. It is also expected to generate enough renewable energy to power up to 150,000 homes and make a material contribution towards meeting the NSW Government's net zero targets and renewable energy objectives.

The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure completed its whole-of-government assessment of the Hills of Gold Wind Farm in December 2023, which included a recommendation to remove 17 of the originally proposed 64 turbines from the project. The application was referred to the Commission for determination because Tamworth Regional Council and at least 50 people objected to the proposed development.

The three-member Commission Panel, comprising Ms Clare Sykes (Chair), Mr Duncan Marshall and Ms Juliet Grant, met with key stakeholders, conducted a site inspection and locality tour, held a public meeting where they heard from 51 speakers, and received 431 unique written submissions from the community in an initial submission period.

In February 2024, the Commission sought advice from the Department on the Applicant's submissions requesting the reinstatement of 15 of the 17 turbines initially recommended for removal by the Department. In late June 2024, the Commission received additional material from the Applicant and the Department, including advice from the Independent Expert Advisory Panel on Energy Transition, recommending reinstatement of those 15 turbines. This additional material was subject to a second submission period, during which a further 214 unique submissions were received.

Key issues raised in submissions and considered by the Commission included the scope of the Application (primarily in relation to the number and location of turbines), visual, traffic and transport, biodiversity, socio-economic, noise and vibration impacts, as well as decommissioning and rehabilitation.

The Commission acknowledges the widespread and deeply held views in the community about the Project, and the impact of the extended consultation and determination process.

The Panel has today, 9 September 2024, granted development consent to the Hills of Gold Wind Farm, subject to strict conditions. In its [Statement of Reasons](#), the Commission found that:

- the application is consistent with the Government's strategic planning and energy framework as it will deliver up to 372 MW of renewable energy, contributing to the transition to lower emissions energy generation;

- the proposed site is suitable for renewable energy development given its proximity to existing electricity transmission networks, topography, wind resources, access to the regional road network and avoidance of major environmental constraints; and
- the project is in the public interest.

The Commission has imposed conditions of consent to mitigate a number of the issues raised by the community. These include requiring the Applicant to – if requested by certain affected landowners - implement landscaping and vegetation screening for residences within 5km of any wind turbine.

The Applicant is also required to undertake road upgrade works and manage transport and traffic impacts, including not allowing turbine blades to be transported to the site from Nundle via Barry Rd (including Devils Elbow) and Morrisons Gap Rd. The Applicant must minimise and report on impacts on threatened flora and fauna species, develop a plan for bushfire emergency management prior to construction, and decommission and progressively rehabilitate the site at the end of the project's life.

The Applicant must ensure sufficient accommodation for the workforce associated with the development, taking into consideration the cumulative impacts associated with other State significant developments in the area, and investigate options for prioritising the employment of local workers.

These and other conditions of consent are designed to:

- ensure communication between the Applicant and the community occurs throughout all phases of the project;
- prevent, minimise and/or offset adverse environmental, social, and economic impacts;
- set standards and performance measures for acceptable environmental performance;
- require regular monitoring and reporting; and
- provide for the on-going environmental management of the development.

All the documents relating to the determination of the Hills of Gold Wind Farm can be found on the Commission's website: <https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/cases/2023/12/hills-of-gold-wind-farm>.