

## **Siting wind farms responsibly.**

### **Hills of Gold Wind Farm: A case study in what not to do**

The wind farm industry would be well advised to create self regulation codes of conduct for the selection of appropriate wind farm sites to avoid the damage done to such an important industry by wind farm proposals in inappropriate locations.

Hills of Gold wind farm is just such a damaging proposal.

#### **A Bad Choice Geographically**

In geographical terms, the site selected is along the very top of mountain ridges, creating a visual impact nightmare for neighbours. The mountainous terrain exaggerates visual impacts and creates inescapable interference with horizons and views.

The geography causes logistical issues. The difficulties accessing the site during construction. The potential for soil instability and erosion.

#### **A Bad Choice for Biodiversity**

Wind farms are part of the renewable push to protect the natural world and slow down climate change. This places a moral onus on Wind Farm developers to minimise impacts on biodiversity. This wind farm proposal sits up against the Ben Hall National Park, and continues through to Crawley National Park. This area has particular biodiverse sensitivity. Not only is it too close to these sensitive areas, the wind farm has successfully placed itself as a barrier to any corridor connecting the parks. Every tree cut down to make way for this wind farm (including those already cleared in anticipation) is further destruction to vegetation corridors linking the parks. Noise, activity and vehicle movement are all obstacles. The turbines themselves, with noise and blade strike, are obstacles. Corridors allow safe access to food, breeding and nesting sites, and become increasingly important in climate change induced pressures as an adaptive mechanism.

#### **A Bad Choice for the Community**

The town of Nundle and its surrounds are a known tourist destination. The town is known for its history, providing a journey back through time. The town setting is also known for its natural beauty. The Hills of Gold town logo alludes to this. Nundle is an award winning tourist town. Most businesses in and around Nundle rely on tourism as their major source of income. The proposed Wind Farm is incompatible with the old world nature of this tourism. Wind Turbines are quintessentially modern. The wind farm clearly cannot sit side by side with the businesses already established and flourishing in this town.

#### **How Not to Conduct Community Consultation**

The environmental and community insensitivity that is evidenced by the proposed wind farm siting is echoed in the proponents approach to community consultation. The company appropriated the town's slogan "Hills of Gold" despite community objection. This demonstrates clearly the insensitivity with which the proponent has approached the community in regards to this project. Ironically, the company has named the wind farm after what it will destroy if it becomes operational.

The very important triple CCC, which acts as a communication facilitator between the community and the proponent has concentrated on the proponent, minimising the effectiveness of the CCC to hear from the community.

Submissions from the community members repeatedly state that there were problems with consultation. A recurring comment in submissions was the Proponent approaching the community consultation process as an exercise in ticking boxes and doing the minimum to meet legislative requirements. The opposition to the project in the community is strong, as evidenced by the survey the community conducted.

Ineffective consultation, as much as it can be made to appear adequate, will not easily win support from a community. However, a badly chosen site ensures the path to gaining community support is difficult, if not impossible.

Regardless of cause, the proposed Hills of Gold Wind Farm does not have a social licence to operate.

As the community preexist the proposal and as impacts of the project on the community will be significant for both quality of life and income from existing businesses the rejection of the proposal by the community is mandate for a rejection of the project by New South Wales planning.

## **In Conclusion**

We, as a society and a global community, have reached a point where serious actions are needed to redress climate change. However, although we need to do this quickly, we also need to do it carefully, ensuring our solutions are not adding to the problems we face.

Energy from wind is an important part of our renewable energy future. However, this is not sufficient for the approval of any wind farm. Where a wind farm is poorly sited to create maximum disturbance to biodiversity, the proposal defeats the purpose of itself. Where a project is poorly sited in terms of surrounding businesses and community it is not granted a social licence to operate.

There are better, less damaging, less invasive sites to build wind farms.

**The Hills of Gold wind farm should be rejected**