

Director — Energy Assessments  
Planning and Assessment  
Department of Planning and Environment  
Parramatta  
NSW 2124

6 January 2022

To whom it may concern,

**RE: Winterbourne Wind Farm | Application No. SSD-10471**

My name is Holly Fletcher, and I am writing this letter to communicate my support for the Winterbourne Wind Farm (proposal ID SSD-10471).

I grew up at “Cairnie” a fine wool merino property purchased by David Fletcher, my Great Great Grandfather in 1863. I have always felt a deep connection to both Cairnie and the town of Walcha and am incredibly proud of my family history, in particular their resilience to recover from wars, depression and the economic hardship associated with fluctuating markets and extreme climate events. Now my parents and two brothers along with their families, have an opportunity to host wind turbines on their land.

The town of Walcha was established by European settlers, referred to as pioneers as they identified the environment as a resource and went about developing it into what we now regard as “prime agricultural land.” Since then, the agriculture industry has been the economic backbone of the Walcha community.

I completely agree with David Salter who recently stated *“It is easy to forget or be unaware of our history and those pioneers who were not afraid to try new things. We owe them all a debt of gratitude for what we have today”*<sup>1</sup>. Such “new things” can be witnessed at Walcha’s Pioneer Cottage, including a tiger moth plane used in the 1950’s by A.S Nivison who innovated spreading super phosphate by air to improve pasture. An Australian first that resulted in farmers tripling their stock carrying capacity. Maybe one day the Pioneer Cottage will feature the Winterbourne Wind Farm also?

Our community has largely been established by volunteers who for the past two centuries have donated time, effort and assets, including land to establish and maintain churches, our showground, outdoor gallery, sports and other clubs, even our current post office.

Volunteers are the heart and soul of Walcha’s community and includes responding to and recovering from environmental disasters, not only volunteering their time, but their equipment and are critical to emergency response agencies, given their expert knowledge of the land.

Knowing that climate change impacts are only going to increase in their frequency and intensity we will only become more reliant on our community volunteers, which will only further strain our slowly diminishing population.

Between 1981 and 2011, the number of farmers in Australia reduced by 40%<sup>2</sup>. Disturbingly, at the same time, a 15% rural population decline was recorded in a single year during the 2002-03 drought<sup>2</sup> further evidencing why climate impacts on rural populations cannot be underestimated, particularly when such stressors further exacerbate losses of services and further unemployment.

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<sup>1</sup> Apsley Advocate. 18 May, 2022. Accessed at: [https://assets.website-files.com/60988f02287568082691eeb1/628437ea7172bf046a39c050\\_Master.pdf](https://assets.website-files.com/60988f02287568082691eeb1/628437ea7172bf046a39c050_Master.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> ABS (2012). Australian Farming and Farmers. Australian Bureau of Statistics. Accessed at: <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features10Dec+2012>

I wholeheartedly agree that Walcha is a “*beautiful part of NSW*”<sup>3</sup>, however such beauty has been and is now more frequently opposed by climate change effects. Most recently we experienced the worst drought in history, an experience only compounded by severe storms and the devastating *Black Summer Bushfires* which over many months burnt 85% of our Oxley Wild Rivers National Park<sup>4</sup>.

Fact is, regional Australia, and our rural community depends on the environment for our income and our livelihoods, meaning, when compared to our city cousins, we have become disproportionately impacted by climate inaction<sup>5</sup>.

What is even more disturbing is the fact that existing greenhouse gas accumulations will further increase global warming over the next three decades, which will only ensure more frequent and intense droughts, severe storms, bushfires, and flood events, and increase the likelihood of such events occurring either concurrently or consecutively. Consequently, increasing the pressure on exposed and vulnerable rural communities<sup>6</sup>.

Good news, however, is if we achieve our emission reduction targets, we will see a reduction in climate change impacts at the end of the century, around 2090. The other good news is those benefits will be observable at regional levels, meaning we, the people in the bush will see a direct return on taking a lead role in tackling climate change<sup>7</sup>.

Although I will not get to see such effect in my lifetime, what better pioneering activity to engage in than the adoption of renewable energy generation that affords the achievement of emission reduction targets. And what better legacy to gift our children and grandchildren. I cannot think of a better example of intergenerational equity than that afforded by the Winterbourne Wind Farm (hopefully also resulting in a “*debt of gratitude*”?<sup>8</sup>).

I fully support all the Winterbourne Wind landholders and their decision to host wind turbines, also those with neighbour agreements, as diversified sources of income will afford greater resilience to unavoidable climate events. Their decision also gives me confidence that our predecessors pioneering spirit continues in our community, in particular the entrepreneurial approach and willingness to harness and develop Walcha’s incredible wind resource.

Charles Darwin was not wrong when he theorised that it is not the fastest or the strongest that survive, it is the most adaptable. You can be the best farmer in the world, however an inability to adapt to our pending, and unavoidable droughts, storms and fires (and the magnitude of such) will only result in one thing – the death of our community and our town.

Those most impacted by climate change are also those with the greatest opportunity to facilitate climate action. Transition to renewables isn’t gifted by a social license, it’s a social responsibility. It doesn’t require permission, instead it requires support by those with a moral compass, those who want to ensure the social, environmental, and economic outcomes of future generations and the future of the bush.

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<sup>3</sup> Voice for Walcha (2022). Turbines on our Minds. Accessed at: <https://youtu.be/pn4vr9475R4>

<sup>4</sup> UNESCO (2020). State of Conservation – Gondwana Rainforests of Australia. Accessed at: <https://whc.unesco.org/document/181922>

<sup>5</sup> Climate Council (2016). On the Frontline: Climate Change and Rural Communities. Accessed at: <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/resources/ruralreport/>

<sup>6</sup> Climate Council (2021). Hitting Home: The Compounding Costs of Climate Inaction. Accessed at: <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/resources/hitting-home-compounding-costs-climate-inaction/>

<sup>7</sup> Dr Helen Cleugh and Dr Michael Grose (2020). Hearing Block 1, Day 1 – Final Transcription. *Proceedings for the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements*. Accessed at: <https://naturaldisaster.royalcommission.gov.au/system/files/2020-05/Hearing%20Block%201%20Day%201%20-%20Final%20Transcript.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Apsley Advocate. 18 May, 2022. Accessed at: [https://assets.website-files.com/60988f02287568082691eeb1/628437ea7172bf046a39c050\\_Master.pdf](https://assets.website-files.com/60988f02287568082691eeb1/628437ea7172bf046a39c050_Master.pdf)

Walcha has no greater opportunity than engaging with Vestas. Their demonstrated global performance and standing positions them perfectly to lead this development in partnership with our host landholders and other stakeholders, those with expert knowledge of the land.

Additionally, the benefits associated with the community benefit fund and secondary local economic stimulation will afford community organisations and local volunteers greater return on their efforts.

Walcha has and will continue to have a strong agricultural industry, which will only become more climate resilient.

I have heard multiple persons state that Winterbourne Wind has “*zero social licence*,” implying community permission must be obtained prior to project approval. However, and given the prospective, yet latent environmental benefits the project will deliver, which community group affords such permission? Is it the families of those farmers who suicided during drought? Or the families of the 26 persons who died during the *Black Summer Fires* or those 2448 families who lost their homes? The list is endless given the scope and magnitude of those impacted by climate change. Irrespective, there is no greater population who will benefit from this project than our current youth, including those who have not yet been born. A sentiment shared by Mark Fogaty at a recent Walcha community forum who stated there's “*got to be something in it for the future generations*”<sup>9</sup>.

In my opinion, there is no better example of intergenerational equity that should be taken into consideration by “the community” when determining the level of acceptance of the Winterbourne Wind Farm.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Winterbourne Wind Farm development application.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Holly Fletcher', with a stylized, cursive script.

Holly Fletcher (BAppSci, MSci, COH)

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<sup>9</sup> Voice for Walcha (2022). Walcha Community Forum - 31 Aug 2022 - Part 1 – Presentations. Mark Fogaty [13:58]. Accessed at: <https://youtu.be/GMXIkUHNig>