



11 January 2023

State Government of NSW
Department of Planning & Environment
Submitted Via Major Projects Portal
Planner: Iwan Davies

RE: APPLICATION NUMBER: SSD-10471 - Winterborne Wind Farm

To Whom it May Concern:

I write to express my **strong objection** to the proposed development at Walcha Shire 2354 known as “Winterborne Wind Farm” (WWF) SSD-10471.

I am a resident of the Walcha LGA and have read the EIS Document.

I believe this development and proposed project is completely inappropriate for our region. The blight on our landscape will be indelible and will destroy the natural beauty and wild scenery that is our local hallmark. Removing people’s ability to enjoy the unspoiled environment is something we will never be able to recapture.

My objections focus primarily on the social impacts of the proposed WWF.

Having read the EIS, my overwhelming feeling was the the social impacts of this proposal were being glossed over with motherhood statements and assurances by the proponent. Furthermore, the extent of consultation that has been undertaken with the community has been grossly insufficient. This is evident in the EIS document as the proponent has failed to delve in any meaningful way into the very real issues we, the community, have raised time and time again.

Section 3.3 “Scoping of Social Issues and Potential Impacts”, Table 3.3 and Section 6, Table 6.2 - Social Impact Assessment makes claims about increased demand for labour/employment, increased demand for goods and services and ongoing employment opportunities. Walcha Shire has a very healthy levels of employment across varying industries and very low levels of unemployment, even for our youth. In fact, we have families who are having to leave their employment within the Shire due to a lack of housing options. This means we have more employed people than we can even house within our area. Until the township grows and additional dwellings are constructed, we can not even accommodate the people who currently have jobs in the area. We do not need to create new employment opportunities that would further exacerbate the housing scarcity issues we experience.

The scale of the build is well beyond the capacity of our town and our region to sustain. The solar farm project in Armidale is already struggling to find workers and to accommodate them. The

same issues will be encountered here with this proposed project. Inevitably, we will be required to import workers from elsewhere who will drain the (already tight) resources of our town, while banking their paycheques and then taking their money back to their hometowns - likely the Hunter, Sydney etc. The trickle down economic benefits touted by the project team will not be felt here in our region. The incomes earned from the project will be taken out of the region. As specified in Table 3.3 our community has concerns about the behaviour of these non-local workers and the potential security, safety and community friction that their presence here will yield. These are very real concerns and given the overwhelming percentage of our community has strongly voiced its opposition to the proposal and the workers and issues it will bring, this will further divide our town and lead to disharmony - all of which can be avoided if we find support in declining this application.

Increased demand for already tight resources in the region will inevitably lead to increased costs of living. Most landholders and families within the region have been exposed to the increased cost of living pressures over the past two years due to Covid and the situation in Ukraine/Russia - these pressures have been universal across Australia. Some have weathered this better than others, based on their personal financial position. However agreeing to a project that will inevitably raise the price level of goods and services SPECIFICALLY just in our region, seems completely counterintuitive. Why the entire region should be penalised financially so that the small number of landholders who have agreed to host the towers are generously compensated and the foreign owned proponent takes their profits back to Denmark is irrational by any standard. Our community should not be penalised financially and socially simply because a handful of landholders and a Danish company has selected our region as a place for them to make a quick dollar.

Tables 3.3 and 6.2 also refer to diversification of farm income streams. Generally speaking, farmers in our LGA across beef, dairy, fat lambs and wool have earned consistent income from their farms, despite drought and fires for well over 100 years. This region is known to be a premier farming region that produces high quality agricultural commodities and is consequently known to be a wealthy district. The landholders in this sector generate significant ROI on their landholdings without adding wind farm income to their net position. A small number of landholders have attempted to establish relationships with the WWF proponents in order to increase their income from hosting turbine infrastructure, despite the overwhelming majority of our community expressing their strong opposition to the proposed project. One would argue that these landholders are demonstrating a position of greed in the face of clear opposition from their neighbours. Listing this as a positive outcome within table 3.3 demonstrates a clear lack of understanding by the proponents as it is "positive" for the small number of families who have made these deals and "negative" for the remaining 85%+ of the community who oppose the proposal.

Claiming that the "Community Benefit Fund" will magically bring the community back together simply because some of the financial benefits generated by the project are being trickled back down to the very community that has been broken apart by the project, is preposterous. It is like claiming that victims of trauma will no longer feel pain once they have been paid off, after the fact. Our community can not be bought off with a bucket of funding, we are clearly articulating that we do not want this project built in our LGA or our wider region for many, well documented, well researched reasons. No amount of gift or gratuity from the proponent who aims to destroy us will be sufficient to compensate for the damage. This is why we say NO to the proposal. Period.

The claim that "community wellbeing is enhanced by perceived environmental benefits of renewable energy development" as a perceived positive, again demonstrates a complete

disconnect between the proponent and our community. People choose to live in this region because it has always been known for its natural beauty and wild scenery, its World Heritage areas and its unique flora and fauna. We do not accept anyone's proposal to destroy all of this for a "perceived" benefit from "green energy" which many (including myself) feel is not yet completely proven to be either green, nor environmentally beneficial.

The claim that the proposed project will yield "Improved vehicular access for fire-fighting in the vicinity of Project" only tells half of the tale. Aerial fire fighting has been required in recent years when bushfires in our National Parks, gorges and hard to reach areas have burned out of control. A handful of tracks to the wind turbines will NOT yield a positive outcome for the region when fighting fires. The fact that the turbines exist at all will totally remove our ability to leverage aerial firefighting techniques which can only have lead to negative consequences for a region that is frequently and regularly savaged by wildfire. Indeed, turbines themselves can spontaneously catch fire, as evidenced in Breadalbane NSW on 5 January 2023, when a turbine in a wind farm project there caught fire. I am unclear as to whether it was struck by lightning or simply caught fire due to electrical fault, however the outcome was the same: the turbine was burning and no amount of firefighting equipment could be used to extinguish the fire. Similarly aerial fire fighting was not an option due to the potential risk to the helicopter pilot. Should this happen across our forested areas during high summer, this could easily cause an out of control fire that could lead to loss of life and property.

Tables 3.3 and 6.2 mention traffic disruptions but again glosses over the severity of the likely impact we in Walcha LGA will experience. The traffic chaos this project will herald will be something this area has never seen. Many of us left busy towns and cities on the coast to escape the traffic mayhem that ruined the amenity. Now this project seeks to bring these problems to Walcha. The extraordinary size of the trucks. The sheer volume of truck and construction traffic is absurd. Our road network already struggles with regular car and semi-trailer traffic. We have had potholes on the Oxley Highway, the Uralla Road, Thunderbolts Way and the smaller local streets within Walcha township that are so severe that we have had to drive at or below 40kmph for large sections of road for most of the past 12-months. This is the damage to our roads WITHOUT the increased volume of traffic from the proposed project. This is from regular vehicle usage in times of heavy rain. Walcha Shire has also experienced multiple road fatalities in the last 12-months which could potentially be linked to the deteriorating road conditions in the Shire. The vehicles associated with this proposed project will utterly destroy our already damaged roads, shifting the burden for repair to the council, State and Federal Governments. We, the local people will have to live our lives around the road repairs and be inconvenienced by it. It will make the roads unsafe. It puts our lives and our livelihoods in jeopardy. This is unacceptable.

Tables 3.3 and 6.2 again glosses over, what it claims are the "perceived" impacts on land values. Again the use of the pejorative term "perceived" demonstrates the contempt with which the proponent treats the residents of Walcha Shire. Everyone in the region knows that our land values will be drastically compromised by this project, should it be approved and constructed. We should not have to suffer the devaluation of our landholdings, our investments and our homes due to this project. Claiming the effect is likely "medium" in impact again serves to whitewash (or could I say "greenwash"?) community concerns when in actual fact almost every household in the LGA will suffer financial consequences from this outcome.

Living anywhere near high tension power lines is widely considered to be undesirable. This is not a "fringe" opinion held by a bunch of hippies and/or conspiracy theorists. Banks know it and they price in a higher measure of risk when extending a mortgage to someone looking to buy near high tension lines. Property values reflect the lack of demand for these sorts of properties. I know this to be true after spending more than a decade working within some of the largest Banks and

Financial Institutions in Australia. It is common knowledge that high tension powerlines are harmful to human health and it is almost universal that people want to live as far as possible away from such structures. There have been more studies done on the dangers of living near high tension power lines than almost any other man-made structure. The studies unanimously point to the correlation between high tension power lines and increased incidence of cancer and neurological problems. Many people leave the big cities looking to escape this threat to human health and the hideous blight these wires and their supporting towers are to the landscape. The fact that our State Government would be considering approving a project that brings these in such huge numbers to our region and building them over such an incredible distance - despite overwhelming public opposition - is inconceivable.

Another line item within Tables 3.3 and 6.2 refers to “Perceived health impacts associated with operational noise.” Infrasound is a well documented, consistently negative, environmental impact experienced by people who live or work within the vicinity of wind farm infrastructure. It is not a “perceived” issue, it is a well documented, physically debilitating, mentally draining, destabilising effect on humans that has followed wind farm developments in all of their locations, all over the world. The people of Walcha are clearly rejecting the proposed development in the full knowledge that a large percentage of residents, not only out on land but also within the town limits, will experience the health ramifications of infrasound exposure. In addition, many people are deeply concerned about the health risks of the electromagnetic frequencies (“EMF”) emitted by the proposed project and its infrastructure. Even visitors taking a sight-seeing trip to one of our landmarks, for example Apsley Falls will not be able to enjoy the majestic scenery without seeing turbines AND being exposed to the sound they generate. This is likely to have a negative impact on tourism, as no tourist wants to experience natural beauty while also being assaulted by infrasound and EMF. We live in a remote part of regional NSW. We do not want our health compromised because of a project being sited too close to human habitation. The location of the proposed development is wrong. The exposure of people to these health risks, who pre-date this development is wrong. We settled here long before any foreign company thought it would be a good idea to destroy the landscape with an enormous wind farm project. We should not have to leave our town and our homes just to preserve and maintain our health.

Tables 3.3 and 6.2 refer to “Altered rural character, including visual amenity impacts” - this is a major concern for me. I do not believe the proposed project will simply “alter” the rural character of this LGA. I believe it will completely destroy it and remove any “character” that currently exists. People chose to settle here for the natural beauty. We chose NOT to settle in the Hunter Valley region because of the industrial wasteland of electricity generation infrastructure and the blight it is on the landscape there. I object to the proposal as it will cause significant visual amenity impact that is permanent and the wild beauty of this landscape will never be able to be restored. This is unacceptable.

Within the Stakeholder section, I note that the stakeholders who are identified as the major financial beneficiaries of the project, have claimed that the proposed wind farm project will cause a “boost to local tourism”¹. This is utter nonsense, nobody, anywhere, at any time goes on a holiday to take in the vista of a wind farm. I cannot believe someone made this claim during a stakeholder session with a straight face and that someone transcribed this comment into the written document, in all seriousness. There is zero evidence, even anecdotally that wind farm tourism exists anywhere on earth. This is one of the most ridiculous things I have read in the whole document, thus far and I refute it. I can not accept that it will cause a positive impact to

¹ Section 4.3.2 Local Residents, Host Landowners. Page 26.

tourism in our region at all. In fact, I am certain it will reduce tourism levels which will hurt the community financially.

The decommissioning phase of this proposed wind farm is also very concerning to me. How these turbines will be removed from the landscape, how they will be disposed of and who on earth will manage this is something I have not seen any convincing discussion on. The component parts for these wind farms are NOT recyclable. There is nothing we can do with these things, other than dig enormous holes for them and bury them. The entire project is washed a pretty shade of green however everyone knows that these projects are not environmentally sustainable in any way. The sourcing of the materials, the building of the component parts, shipping it all here from the Port of Newcastle, getting it all trucked around, getting workers here, sourcing the sheer volume of gravel that will be required for the construction phase (which does not exist locally)... the apparent (and hard to quantify) environmental benefits of electricity generated by wind are negated by the ridiculous logistics of the set up phase and the total lack of an end strategy. Not to mention the carbon catastrophe of constantly flying the highly paid Danish consultants back and forth from the offices of their parent company to keep pushing the project onward.

Those of us who are not in-bed with this project - and by that I mean those of us who are not on the payroll of the proponent or standing to benefit financially from selling out our land for the construction of these hideous turbines or power lines - are the biggest losers in this whole equation. And there are plenty of us! We lose today, we lose tomorrow and our children lose in the long run.

As locals all we will receive are the pain points of this project. We get none of the economic benefits, none of the projected profits, all of the resource stretching to accommodate the workers to the construction phase, all the traffic mayhem, all the damage that the construction traffic will bring to our roads and all of the visual and environmental disturbance and destruction that a wind farm of this scale will cause. This is completely intolerable. More to the point, we don't want the financial benefits, we simply don't want the project here at all. The proponent thinks they can buy us off and ease our concerns with their community benefit fund but we would rather the entire project went away and we can do without their financial support. We have done fine without them for long enough, we don't need them and their paltry compensation. We want our town to stay the way it is and always has been: free of a wind farm.

As a once-proud Australian, I have been saddened over the years as I have watched our landscape becoming spoiled, our resources depleted, our real estate sold off and our infrastructure divested - always into **foreign hands**. This project is no different. The overseas -based company that is the driving force behind this project stands to gain the most in a financial sense and will be parking all of that profit into the banks and the economy of the European Union. The resulting need for management, trouble shooting and ultimately decommissioning are the unpleasant but necessary aspects of the job that will be left to those of us on the ground to manage. They get all the gold and the glory, we are left here to pick up the pieces. On top of having to live in a spoiled environment.

I declare that I have made no donations to any political party, State or Federal in my life, including within the past two years.

I acknowledge and accept the Department's disclaimer and declaration.

Sincerely yours,

A rectangular area with a black background and a white grid pattern, used to redact a signature.