

Director – Energy Assessments, Planning and Assessment  
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment  
Locked Bag 5022  
PARRAMATTA NSW 2124

Name : Simone Timbs

Address: 14192 Thunderbolts Way, Walcha

Dear Director

SSD No 10471 - Winterbourne Wind Farm Walcha

I have many reasons for objecting to the Winterbourne Wind Farm (WWF) project. I strongly believe that poor consultation processes have resulted in this project being in the wrong place, it is the wrong size and it has the wrong developer.

### **Background**

In 2005 the Director of MirusWind Pty, together with a number of landholders in Walcha, registered as WalchaWind Pty Ltd, started WinterbourneWind Pty Ltd and so was conceived the Winterbourne Wind Farm. The site of the Winterbourne Wind Farm was selected because of strong private interest and influence from these original host landowners.

### **No community consultation.**

In a press release by Energy Estate on 15 November 2018, Energy Estate advised it had partnered with Mirus Wind Pty Ltd to develop The Walcha Energy Project. "The Walcha Energy Project is the largest single renewable energy project being developed in the NEM". (National Energy Market).

*"A unique feature of the Walcha Energy Project is the high level of the local community participation from the outset. The development team has worked closely with Walcha and the surrounding community and designed innovative arrangements that seek to balance the interest of the landholders, the community and other stakeholders."*

### **Still no community consultation**

WalchaWind Pty Ltd introduced to the community the Winterbourne Wind Farm Project and Vestas by way of flyer in 2020. (See a copy of the flyer attached.) The flyer confirmed that 95% of Winterbourne Wind Farm had been purchased from Walcha Energy by Wind Power Invest A/, a subsidiary of Danish company Vestas. The remaining 5% of the project would be owned by WalchaWind. This acquisition occurred in June 2019.

The flyer advertised the benefits of the project, the benefits to the community, together with a benefit scheme that would be offered to neighbour landholders to "become a shareholder in WalchaWind".

The WalchaWind Founders and Board of Directors advised they would manage the 5% shareholding they held in Winterbourne Wind Farm and distribute 50% of these funds to the community. With a further 30% to project neighbours who may be impacted by the project.

This was described as *"an innovative approach which will generate significantly greater funds for the Walcha community compared with other wind energy projects in New South Wales."*

For information regarding the Winterbourne Wind project and the host landholder group WalchaWind contact the Project Director, Doug Landfear.

In the Walcha Caller Guide 2021-2023 there is an advertisement for WalchaWind Pty Ltd on page 2. See attached copy.

WalchaWind Chairman States: *"Our mission is to share the financial benefits from the multiple Walcha Wind Farms in a fair and transparent way with the Walcha community, wind turbine and powerline hosts and near neighbours."*

The contact number for WalchaWind is 0419 613 471 which is the office number of Walcha Energy as identified on page 1 of the Caller Guide.

There has been confusion around communication in relation to the Winterbourne Wind Farm development due to project ownership and who to speak to about parts of the project.

In correspondence with Walcha Energy the response was:

*"We won't pass anything on to Vestas...its cleaner if everyone deals with us (Vestas and Walcha Energy) separately due to the projects working under different ownership and project timelines. It's important for the public to treat the two projects in accordance with the correct ownership."*

*Happy to discuss anything **Walcha Energy (renewable energy development company)** which relates to **Ruby hills Wind Farm and Walcha Wind**, Walcha Wind is the community fund management company under the directorship of local land holders."*

And yet there is an obvious overlap between Walcha Energy and Winterbourne Wind Farm Pty Ltd.

Mark Warring, Director of Walcha Energy, is a shareholder and Director of WalchaWind which is a 5% shareholder of WinterbourneWind Pty Ltd. To communicate with WalchaWind you have to contact the WalchaEnergy office. However, if you want to find out more about the Winterbourne Wind Community Benefit Fund, managed by WalchaWind, you speak to the Project Director, Doug Landfear of Vestas.

Currently the Winterbourne Wind Farm website outlines the Community Benefit Fund. With a \$1 million contribution at the Financial Close of the project (not sure what that exactly means but maybe when approved?) and a further \$750,000 per annum once project the commences commercial operations. An additional \$1000 per megawatt over 600 MW build.

and states:

"We are currently working with Walcha Council to determine how this fund will be managed and governed under a Voluntary Planning Agreement, and we will provide further information in the coming months."

In the FAQ sections goes on to say "There is no longer a Neighbour Benefit Program. Instead, we are implementing the Community Benefit Fund as outlined on our website."

The EIS at page 95 references the Community Benefit Fund as outlined above but then at page 60 still references the "Turbine hosts, easement owners and project neighbours are invited to become involved in a 5% stake at no cost. The benefits will be shared 50/50 with the broader community."

When did the *innovative approach* and the *significantly greater funds* disappear off the table? What happened to the neighbour landholders being shareholders in the project? It would appear there are no longer neighbour benefits at all. When did the community fund managed by the originating landholders become a Voluntary Planning Agreement managed by Walcha Council?

The Developer has not addressed any of the above and there are inconsistencies in relation to the Community Benefit Fund and the Neighbour Benefit Agreement in the EIS.

There has been no community consultation in relation to any Community Benefit Fund or Voluntary Planning Agreement. If this is such a great deal, then why has it not been finalised in the EIS? Why have the developers not bothered to communicate this with the wider Walcha community?

In attempts to get to the bottom of the community fund (amongst a raft of other issues), it became apparent that the community fund and neighbour agreements have not been finalised and negotiations are still ongoing, with WalchaWind yet to sign off on parts of this.



Maybe the 5%ers are unable to come to agreement with the Developer? Maybe it has already been on sold? Maybe "the "founders" of the project created WalchaWind as a community fund management company" are no longer in a position to negotiate on behalf of the community? We do not know who will be the ultimate owner of this project but it certainly doesn't seem like Vestas will to be the long term owners. Vestas just want to sell turbine components and the ongoing O & M. So what does that mean for the Walcha community long term?

### **The Lack of Meaningful Consultation**

As outlined above, the way that this project has been developed has created an enormous amount of community discord. The issue of course is a poorly designed and executed Wind Farm Development. The problem is compounded further by poor Developer management and no meaningful community consultation.

As a result, the Voice for Walcha was started. Many felt this renewable energy development was a steam train about to charge into town and take us all unaware. In 5 years time the community would look around at the destruction of our town and wonder how we let this happen. It has taken enormous amounts of community member's time and effort to try to get information to the wider community about the development.

Setting up a website and producing content. Writing to the developer, politicians and specialists in fields, trying to pass information onto the community through the Apsley Advocate, Voice for Walcha web page and social media. Fact checking and telephone calls.

This is not something that we wanted to do, however it was necessary, as the community were not getting this information from the Developer. Certainly not in any meaningful way. It was purely promotional. Telling us what they wanted us to hear. It all looked nice and glossy but it had no substance or depth. Telling us what they were going to do and what was going to happen and how it would be good for us.

As already mentioned, when trying to get to the bottom of particular issues such as BPA in the turbine blades or traffic and transport numbers, it took several efforts at correspondence to get an answer from the developer. Initial answers were vague and erroneous. Phone calls not answered. Emails could take up to 2 weeks for a response. Some of these are issues that pose serious impacts to our community and the developer was giving us lip service.

I encourage you to go the Voice for Walcha webpage. There are some great podcasts of local people having their say about the impacts this development will have on the Walcha community. In particular, at a recent community forum on the 12 January 2023, Adam Marshall, Member for New England said openly and publicly that *"this was the worse EIS he had ever read. The developer is not serious."*

This really is a bad development on so many levels.

This is the view I have formed from my own personal research and from interactions with the Developer.

In conversations with the Community Engagement Officer, I was told that *"all of the information is available for those who want to find it"*. Members of the community should not have to go and find this information. It should be readily available to the community and this is done through community consultation. We don't know what we don't know. We shouldn't be expected to have to go and do our own research into this development, and yet this is exactly what we have had to do.

I also point out that the Community Engagement Officer was the Deputy Mayor at the time. It is unknown how she was appointed to the role of Community Engagement Officer as this role was not advertised locally. This person failed to acknowledge the conflict of interest in holding both of these roles. When this role was ultimately vacated it has remained unfilled.

Along with colleagues from Voice for Walcha, I met with the Vice President, Project Director, and the Stakeholder Manager for Vestas, at my house, at our invitation. It was very clear that they had no understanding of the community sentiment. Instead believing they had done "significant community consultation". This was totally disingenuous. They were insincere and it was clear they had a job to do and it was obvious that they simply did not care about the wider communities opinion.

When it was asked of the Project Director *"if the majority of the community do not want this project, would you reconsider?"* he responded, *"No we are not going away and we are not changing anything."*

The EIS is so poorly written. I don't think the developer thought we would have taken the time to read it in its entirety, to notice the incomplete and incorrect information, misrepresentations and omissions. As an example, the Appendix G BDAR Appendices is in draft form on the planning portal. There is DRAFT across pages 3 - 20 pages. This has not been picked up by the writer NGH nor the Developer prior to submitting it. And we the community have been expected to respond to this draft document. It is only 1055 pages and contains information relating to a Biodiversity offset scheme of over \$50 million dollars and a Species Credits payment of over \$13 million dollars payable by the Developer as assessed for the destruction of native habitat. We didn't miss that little gem!

It will become apparent to the Planning Department in our community submission the glaring issues with the EIS in terms of traffic, water, biodiversity, noise, visual affect, social impacts and flawed ACHAR where the local first nations people have not been consulted. In some ways it feels like we are doing the job for the developer. Identifying the issues so they can go and do the research, amend the EIS and resubmit.

I believe the Developers have underestimated our community. Our skills and cohesion and resolve. I think they thought we were country bumpkins and this would be an easy development to get across the line if they dangled enough cash that we would be happy to go along with it. I don't believe they expected us to have an opinion, let alone voice it so loudly and so strongly. As for the originating host landowners, I think their motivations clouded their judgement and they have created their own narrative to suit their purposes. They made a bad decision and now they have to double down and continue with it. Certainly in terms of the agreements they have signed with non disclosure clauses and an



inability to withdraw from a flawed project which has been rejected by the wider community.

The Community is very much aware the site selection of the Winterbourne Wind Project was driven by host landowners wishing to capitalise on a diversified income stream. On any read of the history of this Project – the proximity to the National Park and associated impacts as outlined above was clearly subservient to the developers' interests.

How can a small number of host landowners and an Internationally owned company, without the consultation or consideration of a community, decide what we want or what is good for our community?

I could go into the errors, omissions and misleading information outlined in the EIS. I could outline the divisive and underhanded behaviour of the desperate host landowners and Developer, but you will read and hear this yourself from the influx of community submissions.

The Community have spoken and they do not want the development, nor do they want the Developer.

The Winterbourne Wind Farm project should be refused due to its significant and unacceptable planning and visual and social impacts, which "cannot be satisfactorily mitigated" by an EIS that is inconsistent, incomplete and inaccurate and a Developer that does not have the social license to operate here.

# WalchaWind

WalchaWind Pty Ltd is a community company, designed to manage funds derived from its 5% share in the Winterbourne Wind Farm.

Back in 2004, a group of local landholders established the foundation for a wind energy project located at Winterbourne northeast of Walcha.

The 'founders' of the project created WalchaWind as a community fund management company for the project. The fund structure, and the 5% community share, is considered an innovative approach which will generate significantly greater funds for the Walcha community compared with other wind energy projects in New South Wales.

**"** Our mission is to share the financial benefits from the Winterbourne Wind Farm in a fair and transparent way with the Walcha community, wind turbine and powerline hosts and near neighbours"

Quote from the  
WalchaWind Chairman (Andrew Locke)

5% Community  
Ownership



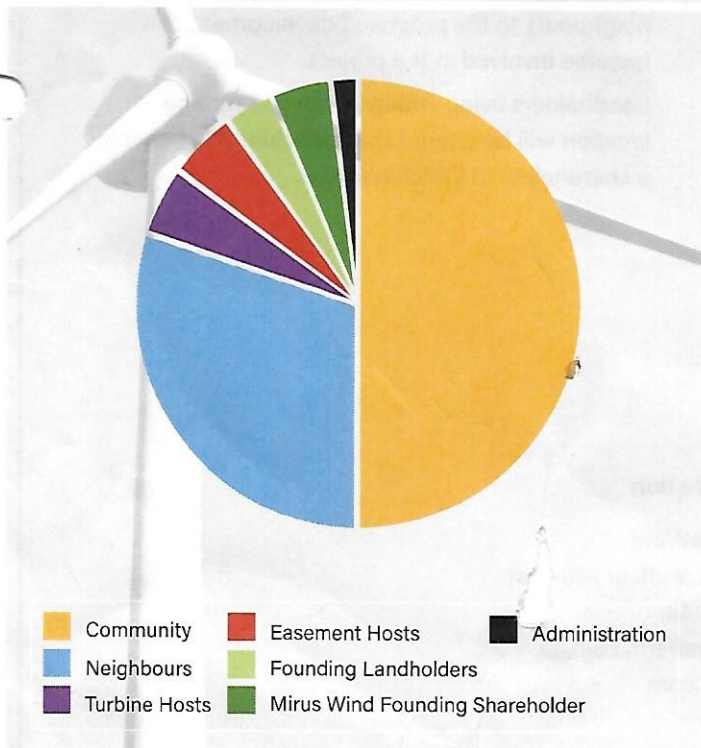
## WALCHAWIND FOUNDERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chairman: Andrew Locke  
Secretary: Ross Blake  
Treasurer: Katrina Blomfield

Ted Fenwicke  
Peter Blomfield  
Rob Blomfield

Greg Schaefer  
Chris Weber  
Mark Waring

## WalchaWind 5% Ownership Distribution



## Community support programs





WalchaWind Pty Ltd envisage the Winterbourne Wind Farm becoming the first of several large scale renewable projects in the Walcha region providing significant economic upside for its community.



#### Who owns Winterbourne Wind Farm?

The project is being developed by WinterbourneWind Pty Ltd, which is 95% owned by Wind Power Invest A/S, a subsidiary of Danish wind energy company Vestas A/S. The remaining 5% of the project is owned by WalchaWind. The Winterbourne Wind Farm will have a capacity of up to 700 MW and an estimated investment of over \$1 billion.

#### What are the Benefits?

- Enough renewable energy generation to power around 500,000 average NSW homes.
- Opportunities for local contractors and businesses.
- Up to 300 new jobs expected to be created during construction.
- Creation of around 16 long term services and maintenance jobs.
- Development of new skilled labour in the region.

#### Where to from here?



#### How will the community expect to benefit from WalchaWind?

- 50% of WalchaWind's project share will be distributed to the local community, to support local community projects and initiatives
- Approximately 30% of WalchaWind's share will be distributed to project neighbours who may be impacted by the project"
- It is expected that money generated by the project will be spent in the local community, which will support the economic health of our community for the next generation

#### What benefits can nearby landholders expect?

- WalchaWind has adopted a progressive and meaningful benefit scheme whereby close neighbours to the proposed development can become involved in the project.
- Landholders living within 3.5km of a turbine location will be offered the opportunity to become a shareholder in WalchaWind.

#### Further information

**WinterbourneWind**  
Project Director - Doug Landfear (Vestas)  
1800 252 040  
[www.winterbournewindfarm.com](http://www.winterbournewindfarm.com)  
[www.vestas.com](http://www.vestas.com)



## GENERAL NUMBERS

Anglican Vicarage.....	6777 2543
Catholic Presbytery.....	6777 2129
Presbyterian Manse.....	6777 2539
Walcha Council Community Care.....	6774 2471
Australian Unity Home Care.....	1300 281 179
Willow Wing Care Support Team .....	1800 722 679
Chemist.....	6777 2744
Veterinarian.....	6777 2302
Piddington's Funeral Directors .....	6772 2288
NRMA Roadside Assistance .....	13 11 11
Walcha General Practice Clinic	
Dr Adrian Allen .....	6777 4293
Walcha Surgery	
Dr Genevieve Freer .....	6777 2068
.....	0429 668 583
Walcha Support Group	
Carolyn.....	6777 6566
Sue .....	6777 2716
Lyn .....	6777 1441
LifeLine.....	13 11 14
Taxi .....	0436 131 008

## EMERGENCY ANY EMERGENCY 000

### Police

Walcha	6777 2244
Nowendoc	6777 0944
Walcha Road	6777 5836

### Hospital

6777 4200

### State Emergency Service (SES) 132 500

**Fire – TOWN** Business calls only 6777 2138

### Fire – BUSH FIRE

New England Control Centre

6771 2400 6732 4473 a.h.

### Essential Energy

Outages & Emergencies

132 080

### DEFIBRILLATOR AVAILABLE FOR COMMUNITY USE

Contact Walcha Health Service on 6777 4200.

Bookings, collection & returns available

Monday to Friday during office hours.

Supported by the Walcha Garden Club

## WalchaWind

WalchaWind Pty Ltd is a community company, designed to manage funds derived from its 5% share in the Winterbourne Wind Farm, Ruby Hills Wind and all future wind developments undertaken by Walcha Energy.

*"Our mission is to share the financial benefits from the multiple Walcha Wind Farms in a fair and transparent way with the Walcha community, wind turbine and powerline hosts and near neighbours"*

Quote from the WalchaWind Chairman  
(Andrew Locke)

WalchaWind call 0419 613 471

### 5% Community Ownership (WalchaWind)



### Community Support Programs







# Walcha Energy



**Providing a local, sustainable  
and reliable source of  
renewable energy for NSW**

13w Fitzroy Street Walcha NSW 2354.  
Office 0419 613 471  
Mark Waring 0407 812 053  
Dan Muller 0402 551 826

[www.walchaenergy.com.au](http://www.walchaenergy.com.au)

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on the Northern  
Tablelands

## QUOTA CRAFT CHRISTMAS MARKET

Last Saturday in November at McHattan Park Walcha