

I wish to register my objection to SSD-10471.

After careful review and consideration of the proponents EIS documents I was left with a feeling of despair and frustration, that yet another Northern NSW community is currently being subjected to the deeply flawed and lengthy assessment process for a wind farm proposal.

As a close neighbour to the proposed Hills of Gold Wind Farm (HoGWF) at nearby Hanging Rock, and through the lens of our Walcha friends and acquaintances, I believe I have unwittingly become suitably qualified to make an informed judgement on NSW wind farm proposals.

My recent wind farm developer interactions suggest it is highly unlikely that the proponent will actually read past the first line of this submission, however in the hope that someone relevant actually does, I have tried to be succinct in highlighting the many flaws with this project.

Sadly, I had hoped the Winterbourne Wind Farm (WWF) would demonstrate to me that the great Wind rush of the 2020's, is on the whole a good thing. However, the WWF proponent is following the same old developer tactics as used for the HoGWF.

Divide and conquer the community, take advantage of the local community's ignorance and unfamiliarity to the development process, manipulate or omit important facts, promise to splash some cash/ bribe whomever, and most important of all, tick the box!

Fundamentally, this distasteful and shady approval process is occurring because Federal and State Governments are belligerently imposing renewable development on our communities with zero strategic planning involving local councils and communities to formulate local land use and locally accepted development standards.

I predict that unless policy makers grasp the growing discontent currently brewing in communities against wind farms, and adjust development guidelines to a more community derived process, the much touted 8 GW of renewable energy for the New England region will be nothing more than a Matt Kean dream.

Presumably, the New England Renewable Energy Zones (NEREZ) target of 8 GW was derived from its proximity to renewable resources, existing transmission corridors and load centres. While this makes logical sense from an electrical engineering perspective, it is totally bereft of any local community input into the acceptance of such a proposal.

The Central and Southern REZ's at a proposed 3 GW's each are clearly considerably less of a burden for local communities to accommodate and therefore many of the issues that arise from the proposed WWF are due to the New England region being expected to industrialise its natural landscape vistas and simply submit to the imposition.

Our New England region should not be expected to accommodate a disproportionate volume of renewable generation sites without due local level consideration and input.

The WWF specific issues I consider the proponent has glossed over are:

- Turbines will impair aerial firefighting capabilities to the World Heritage Listed Oxley Wild Rivers National Park.
- Blade strike to avian species, particularly Wedge Tailed Eagles. (Whilst considered a common native species, being an apex predator and keystone species, any disruption to the population numbers may have substantial impacts to the integrity of the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park (OWRNP) area ecosystem. The proponent has provided no justification that population variation in native bird species due to blade strike is ok to impact the OWRNP World Heritage area.
- “Social licence” has been assumed to be granted. Many local community members feel there has been poor consultation by the proponent and not genuine in nature if they were engaged with.
- As with the HoGWF, the proponent ignores the cumulative industrial impact the WWF will impose on our region. It is assumed as they are one of the first to put in a proposal that their impact is inconsequential, when the masterplan for the 8 GW NEREZ clearly identifies thousands of turbine infrastructure components that are proposed for our region in the next 15 yrs.
- Cumulative traffic impacts have been ignored. The New England Highway is essentially proposed to be a construction site for the next decade or more. Our road conditions are bad enough without continuous construction traffic. Traffic impacts are implied to be temporary, I do believe the mechanical nature of a turbine, blade failure or turbine fire will require future traffic impacts from spare part deliveries.
- Whilst an attempt to demonstrate decommissioning of turbine infrastructure is feasible, the proponent has proposed “half a job”. The assertion that spreading 200 mm of topsoil over a turbine footing is “rehabilitated” is an insult to the environment and community. How is that ground suitably rehabilitated to facilitate the growth of any native eucalypt tree?
- The carrot dangling in front of community members and organisations prior to a development application having a determination made by the consent authority is akin to a politician accepting an all expenses paid holiday from a developer. It is a grubby practice that divides and unsettles local communities that is unethical and corrupt behaviour in my view. The community should not have to be bribed for the project to gain acceptance and social licence.
- Visual impacts to the OWRNP World Heritage area have essentially been dismissed by the proponent. Justified, by asserting that as turbines and infrastructure are not within

the boundaries of the OWRNP and the vegetation within the park will obscure any views of turbine infrastructure they can tick the ok box. Some might say this is akin to walking through the toilet and laundry to get to the formal dining room. The existing rural landscape vista is far more complementary to the National Park than the proposed industrial park. Yet, from the comfort of their Sydney office MOIR landscape consultants have predictably asserted that 230 mtr high industrial structures on the boundary of a World Heritage National Park are insignificant. One does not need a Landscape Architects degree to confidently say this assertion is simply B.S.

Finally, after reviewing several wind farm proponent EIS's and stakeholder submissions over the last 6 yrs there are two significant observations I can make.

1. If you support a proposal, it is simply that, no further justification required. Peddle some proponent propaganda if you wish to be seen as thorough and educated on the subject.
2. However, if you object to a proposal, dedicate considerable personal time, factor in lost earnings, loss of friends, loss of sanity, lawyer up, engage the relevant consultants and provide professional justification to refute a dud proposal.

As the NSW wind farm development assessment guidelines are clearly biased towards favouring often foreign owned entities over local communities, I find it entirely reasonable that if more than 50 objections are lodged against this project triggering IPC assessment, then the Walcha community should be provided with independent assessments at the very least. Developer engaged consultants stinks of conflicts of interest and injustice to our small local communities.