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Subject: Submission re. Hills of Gold Wind Farm EIS
Date: Friday, 29 January 2021 5:20:24 PM

Submission in response to The Hills of Gold Wind Farm Development Application and Environmental Impact Statement

I retired to Nundle because I knew it well from my younger day and I liked the friendly atmosphere that prevailed; everyone helped everyone and watched out for each other. That was until the prospect of construction of a wind farm on the Hills of Gold.

When I first became aware of the proposed wind farm at Nundle/Hanging Rock I was neither for nor against but over the past year or so education and events have seem my support lie squarely with the Hills of Gold Preservation Inc's anti wind farm stance. At first I consulted with both the anti and pro groups as well as attend community consultation meetings but after receiving threats and intimidation from the pro group after I began to sway towards the anti group's views I am definitely anti wind farm. I believe the only reason Mr Robinson is all for the project is money as he has never in the past shown interest in or concern for either Nundle or Hanging Rock. In fact most residents didn't even know who he was.

When Wind Energy Partners (WEP) came to town with their plan it soon became obvious what the detrimental effect on Nundle and its environment would be and because WEP guaranteed at the first meeting that "if the community does not want the wind farm it will not go ahead" a petition of residents against the wind farm was circulated with the result being a good majority of residents signed = the did not want a wind farm on the Hills of Gold.

It is not that those against the wind farm are against wind farms per-say but they believe the Hills of Gold ridge line is not the place for one for many reasons, some of which I will outline below.

My Concerns:

Community Enhancement Fund - The compensation fund is only offered if there is something to loose and the town will loose a great deal. There is no compensation which will repair the divide which has arisen in the village i.e. friends no longer friends, vandalism, threats and intimidation, as well as a general pervasive feeling of unease. It is commonly known also that quite a few aged residents have been either intimidated or paid to display pro wind farm signs on their boundary lines even if they did not support the wind farm. This sort of conduct by the pro wind farm group cannot be condoned in any way and the number of "Friends of the Wind Farm" or "I'm a Big Fan" signs around the villages cannot be taken as a true indication of support – the petition is the true indication of our feelings.

Transport – the EIS shows Head of the Peel as being the preferred transport route but recent publications by the proponents show Hanging Rock including a to be constructed private road diversion before the Devil's Elbow.

Either route is going to cause major disturbance within the Nundle village with it being necessary to dissect the village twice through residential areas to accommodate turns of long loads. Not only will there be transport of wind turbine components but associated materials and manpower. The traffic noise will be unbearable in a normally peaceful

village interrupted by the occasional log truck down one street i.e. Oakenville Street. I came to Nundle for the tranquil quiet lifestyle and do not want it disturbed by this constant noisy traffic intrusion.

If the direct Nundle to Hanging Rock route is to be used then no EIS has been done along this route and should have been done for inclusion in this EIS. The construction of a private road to bypass the Devil's Elbow will necessitate the clearing of a steep well treed ridge line for some distance, causing loss of habitat for arboreal creatures as well as destruction of native trees and under-story flora. **Broad-leaved Pepperbush** (*Tasmannia purpurascens*), **a shrub species classed as vulnerable is most likely to be found in this area.**

Site Visits – the EIS claims in Table 7-2 “.....the Community Consultative Committee (CCC) have undertaken site visits to the project area” but it is not mentioned that on a few occasions anti wind farm members of the CCC have been banned from visits by the project landholder Mr Jim Robinson. Hardly a transparent move and totally repugnant. What did he have to hide?

Employment – It is suggested that 34 ongoing jobs will be created with new people settling into the villages. This is unrealistic as vacant land and rentals are in extremely short supply. Unemployed in the district would not have qualification to obtain ongoing jobs requiring any sort of qualifications.

Tourism – Nundle and Hanging Rock are widely known and loved for their old world charm and historical value. Visitors come to enjoy the slow paced lifestyle, the bush, the wildlife and scenery. Visitors support our shops and are of immense economic value to the community. Discussion with many long time visitors through my position as Secretary of the Nundle Craft Shop Inc has shown that if the wind farm goes ahead they will no longer come to Nundle. Our business economy is doing fine just how it is and does not need a wind farm and its so called benefits. Business owners came to Nundle because of the peaceful lifestyle and fill a niche market in the area for day trippers and online shoppers. The majority of residents like it as it is and “if it ain't broke, don't fix it”. Nobody wants the village overshadowed by industrial mechanical monstrosities totally destroying the tranquil rural vistas presently enjoyed.

Soil & Water – There is widespread concern regarding the illegal land clearing which has been happening along the Hills of Gold over several years. The landowner claimed it was all for blackberry clearing but research has shown it is not, but clearing of forest and woody stands. Just one example can be seen at <https://tinyurl.com/y3byt5zy> The tree felling, clearing and the row of dead trees in the background are exactly where wind turbine 21 is set to go and not a blackberry in sight. This sort of illegal operation has just shown the community the complete arrogance of the landowner and proponents of the wind farm who surely must know about it. The wind farm is not a foregone conclusion and should not be treated as such.

The EIS says 49% of the project area has been cleared of native vegetation; I suggest a large percentage of this clearing has been illegally done over the past 10 years (more so in recent years especially where required for wind turbine placement and access). This destruction should never be rewarded by approval of the wind farm.

It is of major concern that erosion will be a major problem during and after construction on such a very steep site and will create more gullies, cause silting in nearby creeks and rivers reducing water quality and destroying riparian habitat. The Hills of Gold are a fragile environment and cannot withstand such interference. There are 3 major catchment areas i.e. Namoi, Hunter and Manning with 14 associated and named streams located within the

project are, all of which could be detrimentally effected.

The associated land clearing to accommodate the transmission lines is also of concern socially and environmentally and is not supported.

The Hills of Gold hold many water aquifers which could be disrupted by earthworks and explosives necessary for placement of turbine bases. We cannot afford to have our water supply either contaminated, reduced or cut off. The risk is too high to bare thinking.

Wildlife – Being in such close proximity to the Ben Hall's Gap Nature Reserve and the Crawney Pass National Park the Hills of Gold are a haven for native wildlife which will be detrimentally impacted by by land clearing for and operation of a wind farm.

- **Micro Bats** of which there are eight (8) species named to be in the project area are all vulnerable to disturbance of habitat and in danged of death by the turbine sails while foraging. The area withing the proposed wind farm site also contains many karsts, caves, crevices and cliffs all of which provide roosting habitat for the local micro-bats Micro bats are, along with mega bats, a major source of forest pollination and thus regeneration and must no be allowed to be place in any type threat to their survival. “No bats, no forest!”.
- **Mega Bats** like the listed as vulnerable to extinction Grey-Headed Flying Fox are commonly see in the project area during Eucalyptus and Angophora flowering seasons, flying to and through the site from as far as Tamworth & Scone roosts. I believe the EIS survey may have been done during non flowering times as in good wet years both the Grey-Headed and Little Black Flying Foxes being a common site. As a WIRES bat specialists I can confirm this as I have been called out far too many times to rescue bats from barbed wire fences along the Hills of Gold and nearby areas. Mega Bats are particularly susceptible to death by wind farm rotors as unlike micro bats as they do no echo locate.
- **Birds inc. Raptors.** 18 species of birds have been reported to fly at rotor height in the proposed wind farm area including the Australia Raven, Brown Goshawk, Wedge-Tailed Eagle and White-breasted Woodswallow. The Wedge-Tail Eagle in particular has seen its numbers rapidly decline do to the not uncommon local practice of shooting or bail laying it is imperative that all care is taken not to cause further slaughter of this iconic bird. It is of the utmost importance not to disturb suitable nesting sites in tall isolated trees.

In closing, all I want to say is the wind farm project is not wanted by the majority of the community for many different reasons. The original proponents stated at the beginning of all this that if the community didn't want the wind farm then it would not go ahead. Well the majority don't want it, don't want their village lifestyles destroyed, don't condone the conduct of the pro wind farm side. The original proponents should be held at their word.

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