

Dr Sandra Burgess

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Limeburners Creek

2324

Phone 0490013905

8/1/2021

Re: Hills of Gold Wind Farm (SSD-9679)

Dear Sir/Madam,

I have been visiting the Nundle and Hanging Rock area for over 50 years. In 2005 I purchased a small block of land at Hanging Rock. I visit the area every few weeks.

I wish to **object** to the proposal for the following reasons.

### **1. Neighbour Benefits Sharing Program**

Does the voluntary agreement mean that the residents who engage with the company in these agreements can no longer seek outside help should a dispute arise during the lifetime of the project? The idea of a complainant having to deal only with the company is not in the best interests of anyone but the company. Pressure to keep any dispute strictly between the two parties who have entered the voluntary agreement could prevent the wider community from being informed of any problems.

### **2. Traffic**

This is a major problem. How can this route even be considered by the proponents? The imposition of such large volumes of traffic on a road that is the only access between Hanging Rock and Nundle is unacceptable. The roadworks alone would cause massive disruption to residents and visitors, let alone the volume of traffic. What happens if emergency services such as ambulance and fire responders are needed? Access in and out of the properties along

the route would also be compromised. 502 Vehicles per day on a single access road to an isolated community is a hardship that is unreasonable and should not be imposed on the community. Clearly this sort of disruption over several years will have a major impact on the Hanging Rock and Nundle area.

Sheba Dams were built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to supply water to the goldmines at Hanging Rock. Over time these dams and surrounds have become a source of enjoyment for campers and visitors to the area. The campsites are filled with caravans, tents and campervans every school holidays and have been so for generations. There is an abundance of birdlife, flora and fauna there. People fish in the dams and kayak on the water. Even in winter it is a place that is often visited.

The proposed roadworks and increased traffic would negatively impact the enjoyment for all of those who go there. Some of the campsites are situated very close to Barry Road and the turnoff to Morrisons Gap Road is close by. Has anyone considered how close the dams are to the proposed windfarm and the number of people that would be impacted if it is approved?

There are also concerns that the roadworks would destroy not only native vegetation but would impact Crown Reserves and destroy part of the European history of the area by eliminating Black Snake Goldmine and associated tunnels and entrances.

### **3. Lack of Thorough Evaluation**

Several times throughout the EIS there has been reference to "desktop studies". This project is a bad idea to begin with but to fail to evaluate it thoroughly i.e. by sending relevant qualified people to the site seems very remiss of the proponents and adds to the perception that this EIS was rushed through and not sufficiently investigated.



#### **4. Existing Renewable Energy Development**

Hanging Rock is surrounded by pine plantations. Recent logging has taken place in close proximity to the Hanging Rock village. The area along Barry Road is clear felled as is a vast swathe of land along Forest and Cemetery Roads.

Numerous trucks carrying logs pass through Nundle. I am unsure if these truck numbers have been included in the tally of vehicle movements on Barry Road as documented by the Hills of Gold Windfarm EIS.

Native animals make their homes in the pine plantations and the recent logging activity has displaced many of them. It will take years for the area to regenerate

If the windfarm is approved there will be even less habitat for the birds and animals. The remaining habitat should be preserved and allowed to expand not be diminished even more.



Above is an image of a section of logged pine plantation at Hanging Rock taken by me in 2007, some 14 years later the area is slowly regenerating but is still unlikely to support an abundance of native species. The proposed windfarm would have a similar impact and one that would affect the natural environment for much longer. There are few corridors available for the movement of wildlife now that the pine forests have been logged. Please understand what the impact on the wildlife would be and reject this proposal.

Renewable energy is necessary to the future survival of the planet but this project will destroy an area that should remain as it is. The country surrounding Hanging Rock supports threatened and endangered species of plants and animals and adds to the wellbeing of the many visitors to the area. The assertion by the proponents that if the windfarm is approved it would encourage eco-tourism is untenable. What is more likely to happen is that those who value the place as it is would perceive that it had been diminished and would feel less like visiting the area.

It is wrong to expect this place to support another project that will cause more environmental destruction. Windfarms in the proper place will help to lower carbon targets but this is not a suitable location.

## **5. Findings of the Environmental Risk Assessment**

*The majority of identified environmental and community issues incurred medium levels of risk, whilst others demonstrated a low level of risk. Biodiversity as well as landscapes and visual impacts were assessed as presenting a high and very high level of risk respectively.* (EIS 8.3 p142)

The damage that the notion of "nature as inanimate resource" has done to the earth and its people is evident. The beauty, fragility and sacredness of the natural world demonstrates the interconnectedness between all of life. Hanging Rock and the surrounding area was once an unspoiled wilderness. In the relatively short period of European settlement between the late 1840s and 2021 it has been damaged but not yet destroyed. The remaining parts of it are too valuable to destroy for any reason.

## **6. Aboriginal Sites**

So far I have been unable to find a response from the local Aboriginal Land Council anywhere in the EIS. I would be interested to learn more about the potential impact of the project on the Aboriginal people of the area from their perspective.



## 7. EP and A Act

The section 6.2.1.2 in the EIS lists one of the objects of the act being

(e) To protect the environment, including the conservation of threatened and other species of native animals and plants, ecological communities and their habitats.

This EIS fails to adequately address the impact the project will have on the native plants and animals. They talk of returning the land to previous usage once the life of the windfarm is over. But what is suggested is to return it to agricultural use. There is no thought of how the native plants and animals will be restored. It is clear that would be like trying to get the genie back into the bottle.

## 8. How the Project Will Impact Me

I know that in the scheme of things I am relatively insignificant but I must say how devastated I am that this area is even being considered for this project. As previously stated I have been a regular visitor to the area for more than fifty years. I own a small block of land on Barry Road. I studied Hanging Rock and the surrounding area for seven years and wrote my PhD exegesis about the place. My heart breaks at the thought of what will happen to the environment. I have attached a section of the prologue I wrote in 2013 to show how much this place means to me.

*There are places that deeply affect us because of their beauty. They have a profound influence, enabling us to transcend our mundane existence and experience the natural world in a way that affirms our connection to all living organisms and systems in the universe. For me Hanging Rock is such a place.*

You may dismiss me as being an over sensitive artist but that is how I feel.

### Declaration

I have made no political donations in the previous two years

*A. Burgess*