

I would like to object to the Hills of Gold wind farm, SSD - 9679 and raise following issues:

Consultation

Page 338, Table 19-1

Impact on local safety: The key safety concern raised during engagement by two respondents was local road safety during the construction period. The proponent is preparing a traffic and transport assessment (Appendix G) and has consulted with Morrison Gap Road residents to ensure a balanced distribution of benefits aligned to level of impact.

I have not been consulted in the matter of safety concerns or any other matters. It seems that I have been left out of any consultation process altogether. When it comes to traffic and construction activities along Morrisons Gap road, I will be the most impacted as I live at the very end of the public road.

Unsuitable location, natural beauty

"Wind farms are not as noisy as Pitts street" the main host said to me. "That's why I don't live in Pitts street!!" I responded. There is no place like this one in Australia. They offered to buy me out, I suggested they find another place like it. That's where the conversation ended.

The very first time I saw my property was after weeks of inspecting properties all over the New England tablelands. As I drove along Morrison's Gap rd and came into "Glen Rai" I had the most overwhelming feeling of being home.

I have always said that I will not leave, they can put me in a wombat hole or scatter my ashes here but I'm not leaving. When people ask me what it's like I tell them it's just like the scenery in the movie The Man from Snowy River without the granite boulders. Never in 100 years did I expect to have to envisage an industrial turbine development on my doorstep, to say that I am devastated is an understatement. I have lived remotely at the end of a dirt road for two thirds of my life because I love the remoteness and privacy.

When I lived near Grafton I flew to Sydney and looked down at an area totally surrounded by bush and thought at the time I would give anything to live there. It was meant to be because that became my home.

A huge concern of mine is the fine dust pollution from blades being cut up on site and contamination of my soil and water by fibreglass compounds which will end up even in Tamworth's water supply.

Fire

A large concern is the firefighting aircraft not being able to function, Glen Rai was saved because of aircraft in the last year's fires.

Biodiversity

I have wanted for years to have my property used for an eagle rehabilitation and release facility. This area has a huge concentration of Wedge tailed eagles , at times you can see up to 14 Wedge-tailed eagles circling on the updraughts. These magnificent birds nest and breed on Glen Rai and the surrounding Ben Halls nature reserve and will be decimated by blades which at their tips are moving at over 300 kilometres an hour. These meat mincers will also decimate our important bat populations. This is not the place to put meat mincers!

Tasmanian Pepperbush has recently been cleared for this project, more environmental vandalism to save the planet.

Water

All the unregistered bores my neighbour has drilled recently along the ridge have to be impacting on the water table. There is one thing I have noticed is that all his dams appear to be full, some miraculously filled up during the drought, while the dams on the neighbour's properties have dried up during the drought, and are still not full now. He must be pumping the water from his bores and filling up his dams.

Visual

I am an award winning artist, my studio will be a part of my new house up on top of The Great Dividing Range. This was the view that took my breath away the first time I drove up to inspect this property after searching for months. The magnificent views would be totally ruined by industrial turbines, concrete batching plants, battery storage facilities, shadow flicker and the horrendous red flashing lights every 2 seconds all night. My windows are wide open to take in the views and night skies , which are absolutely amazing away from any other lighting. The stars look close enough to reach up and touch them and I have not used curtains or blinds for over 20 years. I have other artists asking to come to Glen Rai to paint the incredible scenery, that is how spectacular it is! This needs to be protected for future generations, not turned into an industrial development!

Shadow flicker

These turbines would impact on my property totally, I work and spend the majority of the day outside, this a working Quarter horse stud and American bison breeding property and under no circumstances is it acceptable to have industrial turbines near my boundary, since anywhere within 400 metres is a designated danger zone for workmen, I don't wish to have them even that close!

I have had absolutely no monitoring done despite repeated requests to do so.

I would have a 180 degree vision of turbines instead of the stunning scenery I am blessed to view daily.

Soil

The land on the western slope of the North Eastern part of the project is prone to slips, to the tune of kilometre long section at a time. I have personally seen large sections of hillside slip a few times over the last 20 years. It's quite a sight when the whole side of the hill moves over a hundred meters downhill, taking with it everything. This happens when the soil is saturated after a long period of rain. I used to contract muster cattle for 15 years for the main host of the proposed wind farm, who is also my neighbour. I know the project site intimately and have covered nearly every inch of it on a horse.

The house saga

My property is 1300 acres and consists of two lots: lot 46, where the original soldier settlement house was built in the 1920s, now very old and run down, and lot 47 which has always had its own dwelling entitlement. It was always on my mind that a new house needed to be built at the top, close to the front gate. I enquired about the possibility with the local council back in 1999 , prior to purchasing Glen Rai. (See Appendix A). However, having to borrow heavily in order to afford the property, I was unable to do anything about building a new house for many years.

In 2016 my father passed away and left me his property as inheritance. In February 2017, Tamworth Regional Council has once again confirmed that Lot 47 has dwelling permissibility pursuant to clause 4.ZB(3)(b) or 4.ZB(3)(f), minimum lot or holding size of 200 hectares. Planning Certificate attached as Appendix B.

My late father's property was sold in April 2018 and in August 2018 I have applied for a dwelling on lot 47. The house site was chosen in the top left corner of my property, close to the front gate and to capitalise on the most breathtaking views one could ever see. I was hoping that the choice of location would help attract AirBnB visitors to supplement my income.

On 27th of September 2018 Someva Renewables submitted an objection to my DA, interfering with what should have been a straight forward process of a rural house approval, for their personal financial gain. At that time PEA for the wind farm was not submitted yet. I have instantly felt that council is trying to stall the process as the assigned officer has cancelled the scheduled visit 6 times. On 10th of January, 5 months after my application, I finally had the (one and only) site visit from the Council.

It took them a further 5 months to send me a letter with the request for additional information and after taking all this time, they gave me 21 days to amend the site plans and provide additional reports.

In the mean time, they have obviously been communicating with WEP/Someva and there is a record of another objection to my DA by Jamie Chivers on 18.01.19. The request for additional information I have received from the council seems to be a copy/paste from Chivers' objection.

The council meeting was organised and using a combination of [REDACTED], omitted information and a mistake in my DA which I could have corrected if notified, they have rejected my DA. [REDACTED]

My DA for a new house should have been assessed on its own merit, without the interference from a wind farm developer. The wind farm wasn't even applied for at the time. A wind farm that might or might not be approved. And if approved, might or might not be constructed, of which there are plenty of examples around.

I understand that my refusal to accept the impacts of the wind farm upon my property is getting in the way of somebody's big money, but my right to enjoy my property and live the life I choose should not be any less than that of my neighbours.

Objections to my dwelling claimed that the dwelling was only proposed to stop the wind farm. This is grossly incorrect. I hurried with the dwelling application because I wanted to make sure that the design of the wind farm and any future potential development on the ridge takes my future residence into account with the visual, noise and shadow flicker impacts assessed. The dwelling was not proposed to interfere with the wind farm, but to improve the quality of my accommodation and to increase the capital value of my property.

The DA process is usually simple and if there are mistakes or omitted information, council gives an opportunity to the submitter to correct it. It wasn't the case with my DA. Some mistakes were never brought to my attention, such as the fact that draftsman had accidentally nominated the wrong size for a water tank. This issue has only surfaced on the day of my DA rejection and was used as one of the reasons.

I have asked for video and audio assessments from the new dwelling site, additionally to the existing one, in an email to Jamie on 12.06.20.

In response, I was forwarded a broad map of the area with the following message:

"In consideration of a new dwelling location you should consider the information made public as part of the preliminary environmental assessment and particularly both the preliminary visual and noise assessments. I have attached images from these that should help understand any potential impact on your plans."

"We can't offer to install an additional noise logger at a location other than the existing dwelling and our offer stands to assess the existing dwelling and install a noise logger on Tuesday if you would like. Please let me know if you would still like this to occur for both the noise logger and visual montages"

Basically, my request for additional assessments was ignored and I was told to consider the impacts to my proposed dwelling and plan accordingly. But the way I see it, they are starting the conversation from the wrong end. THEY should consider the impacts to my proposed dwelling and design the wind farm accordingly, around my dwelling and in the way that would minimise the impacts.

Wind Energy Partners, Someva and Engie have interfered in the process of reviewing my Development application by the Council.

Having a second dwelling on my property, not only increases the value of the property, but allows to sell off lot 46 with an old dwelling, should I chose to do so.

The developers have totally, consistently disregarded my proposed dwelling on lot 47, despite being aware of the proposal for at least two years and being told on countless occasions that my dwelling proposal will go ahead. I wanted to make sure that the project is sensibly sited, with my proposed dwelling taken into account, and that the turbines are located at the appropriate distance and the impact to my dwelling is avoided or minimised. I wanted to preserve the possibility for value adding to my property by having the new dwelling. My right to develop my property and capitalise on the material increase in value should not be any less than that of my neighbour, who seems to be on the never ending quest for an even greater wealth.

My new house on Lot 47 has been approved by a private certifier on 11th of November 2020 as compliant development. Coordinates of the house are -31.560247°, 151.165401°

It must be assessed along with other residential dwellings and DA's for visual and noise impacts.

Traffic and access

Who's got the use of the crown Rd which is access to lots 47 and 46? And the strip between Sydenham and Robinson which is my legal access? These are very important questions which need answering before the project is even considered. I would also be a prisoner on my property for the duration of build time as there would be very limited openings in between the traffic hauling components and other infrastructure.

This project should not be considered for approval until detailed engineering drawings are in place for all access roads. There is no need to approve an impossible to build wind farm. All it would achieve is further pain to the community, with ongoing tensions between the supporters and opposers of the project. We need to have a definite answer whether it will ever be built or not. Otherwise both sides of the community will be subject to the ongoing anxiety while waiting for the outcome. While the pro-development side are waiting for the promised jobs and compensation money, the pro-preservation of the ridge side will be fearing the possibility of negative impacts should construction ever begin.

Please don't leave this community to live in suspense for years!

The proponents talk about the internal private access road network up to a combined total length of approximately 48 kms. One part of this access roads follows my fence line. WEP have not provided detailed drawings of the road around my corner and I am worried about trespass.