

SUBMISSION – Hills of Gold Wind Farm Application NO SSD 9679

I live on a small rural residential subdivision situated on the ridgeline of the Great Dividing Range above the village of Nundle. The subdivision is located on the narrow, unsealed Morrisons Gap Road, which leads to the proposed site of the Hills of Gold Wind Farm.

When some residents first heard of the proposed development and studied the DPE Wind & Energy Visual Assessment Bulletin, we were under the impression that the 230m high turbines could not be placed closer than 3.1km from a dwelling. This turned out not to be the case, as the Developers are wanting to take advantage of this forested mountain range and relying heavily on existing vegetation for visual mitigation. One subdivision dwelling (Lot 9 Morrisons Gap Road) is 1.38km from the closest WTG, with 7 WTGs within 3.1km of that same dwelling. An adjacent dwelling to the proposed wind farm would be even closer to WTGs. Some other landowners within the 3.1km development zone will also see the WTGs, others may not see WTGs from their dwelling but they will be visible from various locations on their properties. Night lights on the turbine towers are also a major concern for residents.

The Wind Energy Visual Assessment Bulletin raises the problem with relying on existing vegetation as mitigation screening (Page 39) and states:

“In addition to vegetation as a mitigation tool to screen views to wind turbines, consideration should also be given to the potential for existing vegetation to be lost, removing visual screening that may have been relied upon to ensure reduced visual impacts from wind turbines. **Loss of vegetation can occur through circumstances such as trees falling over due to senescence, trees blowing over in wind storms, trees being chopped down, or trees burning down in bushfires.**”

All these incidents are common in forested mountain regions and have certainly been experienced by residents of our subdivision. There was also a Section 44 bushfire on the wind farm host property in early 2020. Another scenario that could invalidate screening could be the removal of trees on a close neighbour's property.

Taking into consideration the concerns raised in the Visual Assessment Bulletin with reliance on existing vegetation as a mitigation screening tool, WTGs should not be positioned in such close proximity to any rural residential properties.

Apart from my concerns raised above, I consider the site for the wind farm to be totally unsuitable, both visually and physically due to the difficult terrain and access. It will radically change this wonderful area and destroy so much of the beauty that our tourists admire and the locals appreciate every day.

Two images below show examples of the visual impact from 2 properties on Morrisons Gap Road rural residential subdivision.

A third image fyi shows a 65 metre turbine blade on its way to the Silverton NSW Wind Farm. We could never envisage something this size negotiating the narrow streets of Nundle village, let alone the winding and steep road up the mountain to the project site. The Developers are also considering the 85 metre blade!

