

24 January 2021

Director - Energy Assessments
Planning and Assessment
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment

To Whom it May Concern,

RE - HILLS OF GOLD WIND FARM APPLICATION No. SSD 9679

EPBC ID Number 2019/8535

- I am attaching my submission to the above mentioned development application
- I hereby declare that I object to the Hills of Gold Wind Farm proposal
ID No. SSD 9679 EPBC ID No. 2019/8535
- I would like my personal details withheld
- I have not made any reportable political donations in the previous 2 years

Please consider the following points outlined in my submission. I trust that fair consideration will be made for all factors raised by myself and others who opposed this project.

Yours Sincerely,

Local resident / landowner

River Road, Bowling Alley Point

Submission for Objection

**I hereby declare that I object to the Hills of Gold Wind Farm Proposal
ID No. SSD 9679. EPBC ID No. 2019/8535**

Reason for Objection:

Whilst I concede the need for renewable energy such as wind and solar and support this for the future I personally believe that in this instance a project of State significance such as The Hills of Gold Wind Farm project should not be built adjacent to the historical town of Nundle and Hanging Rock.

The EIS refers to the support by locals (Refer to 4.4 - Site Suitability) with the suggestion that the project has received community support from the residents of Nundle and Hanging Rock with the formation of Friends of the Wind Farm and the erection of support signage (Clause 4.4.7). This does not give a clear indication of what is going on in the community. Many residents oppose this project and there are several signs around town suggesting this. However, there was no mention of the community opposition to the project and the signage indicating this in the EIS.



When we were looking to purchase a property some 17 years ago we looked at several different locations. It was the area of Nundle that drew us in because of its cohesive community and its unique history. More importantly though was the outstanding beauty of the surrounding countryside and the amazing views of the endless ridgelines surrounding Nundle and beyond. These are known as the 'Hills of Gold' and aptly named, as any local will tell you. The scenery is magnificent and deserving of a cessation to take in the sight of these hills during the golden hour. Over time we have shared this breathtaking scenery with friends and family, who also have been overwhelmed by the colours and panorama. The prospect of this view being spoilt by large wind turbines is incomprehensible and would totally destroy the aesthetics of this untouched and stunning landscape.



The town of Nundle is quite unique, nestled at the base of the ridge line stretching from Hanging Rock to Crawney Pass. It has beautiful tree lined streets which include Chinese Pistachio, Crepe Myrtle and many other large established trees. There are several historical buildings which provide attractions for tourists and create the historic atmosphere which makes the town distinctive. This is what I love about it.

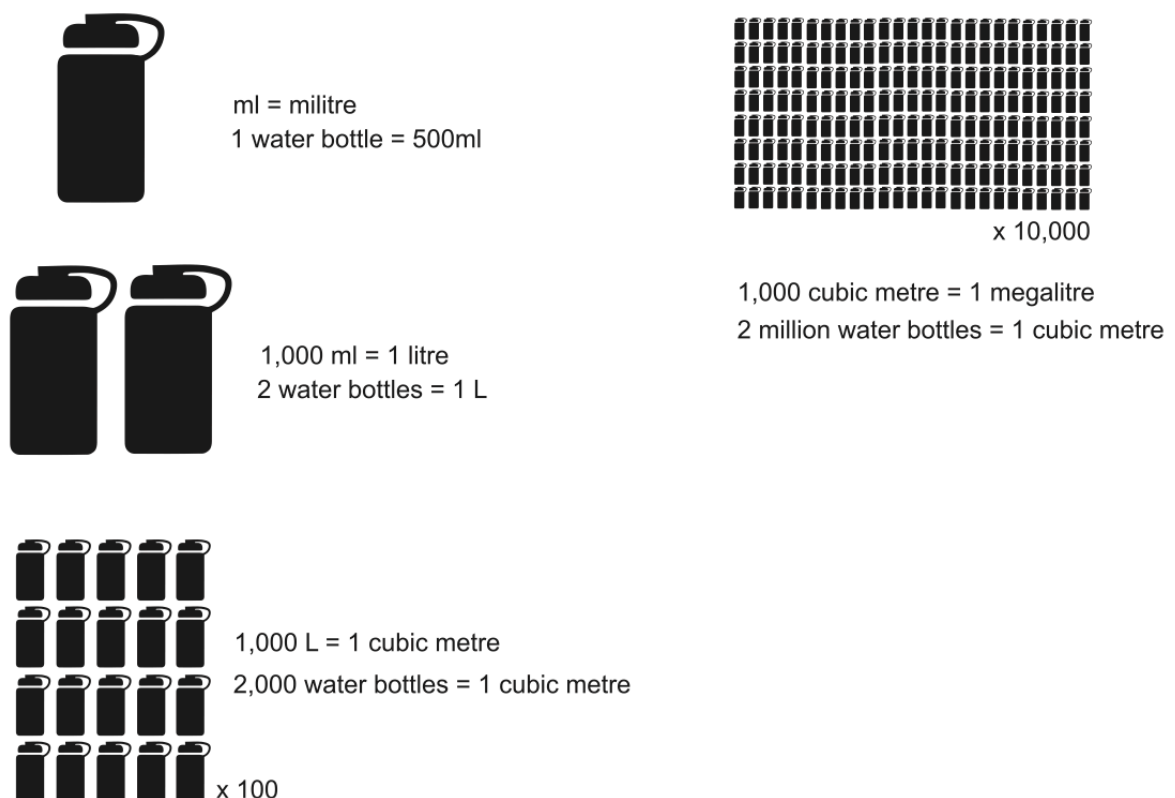


Some points of concern in the EIS that I would like you to consider;

1. The impact the wind farm has had on the community cohesiveness. It has already divided the community and caused disharmony, isolation and social exclusion for many residents, myself included. I feel this will only intensify should the wind farm project go ahead.
2. The long-term health and financial impact for residents living within close proximity and surrounds. The real impact will not be known for many years.
3. The location of the wind farm has clearly been chosen based on the cost-effectiveness and proximity to the transmission grid with inconsequential consideration given to the unique, historic and pristine countryside that will no doubt be effected. There is no compensation proportionate to this.
4. The visual impact the 70 large scaled wind turbines will have on the landscape. These can and never will blend in with the natural rural surrounds, destroying the uniqueness of this pristine landscape and its peaceful character.
The ridge line up at Hanging Rock will be dominated by wind turbines. This ridge is large scaled, kms long and over whelming.....which is why it is truly unique.
The impact from the turbines will only be enhanced at night when the lights and aviation warning lights are triggered.
5. The location of the wind turbines will deny general access to the amazing views that are currently available from Morrisons Gap Road and Shearers Road. For years I have taken friends and visitors up to the top to experience the outstanding views down to the Upper Hunter and over Nundle/Crawney. I'm almost certain we will no longer get to enjoy this experience as access will most probably be denied by the wind farm for security reasons.
6. The proposed site is relatively isolated but will still be potentially impacted by noise, blade throw and shadow flicker (stated in Clause 5.4.2 EIS). Construction equipment and wind turbines have the potential to generate noise not typically experienced in the region. There are a number of species listed as threatened fauna (Section 9 EIS) which will undoubtedly be affected. I personally have heard the quoll in the area and local landowners have sited Koalas. The EIS states White Box-Yellow Box- Blakely's Red Gum Grassy TEC Woodland and Derived Native Grassland as critically endangered.
The environmental impact on the biodiversity of the region and its effect on important environmental and riparian corridors also is of huge concern.
It astounds me that we are expected to sacrifice so much flora and fauna and to then be sold this wind energy as 'green' energy.
7. The weather conditions during both summer (dust) and especially winter (snow and ice) will no doubt impact the mitigation process. The water courses which run into the rivers from that area are sensitive and pristine.

My concern is regarding the contamination and disturbance to these vulnerable areas from water runoff during extreme weather conditions. Also transportation causing damage to the biodiversity and general access during the winter months.

8. Water is 'liquid gold' in this region with most of the surrounding area enduring severe drought for the past few years. It disturbs me to be informed that this project could be using 55ML of water sourced mainly from the Peel River and bore water (Clause 16.4 EIS and Table 16-7) over a 2 yr period. If bore water is to be used what capping of usage ML/year entitlement will there be on the developer? The Chaffey Dam holds approx. 102,000 ML at full capacity and is currently sitting on just over 40% capacity after much rainfall. The level has dropped from full capacity in October 2016 to an extremely low level prior to the recent rainfall. The Peel River flows into the Chaffey Dam and does not have a constant flow at all times. During the past few years it has been totally dry. Strict water restrictions have been placed on residents. Nundle is currently on **permanent** water conservation measures (ie. permanent water conservation measures are always in place when there are no actual water restrictions) and access for any purpose other than that placed by these restrictions is to be paid for at the bulk water filling stations provided by Tamworth Council. Based on the following diagram 1,000,000,000 x 1 litre bottles = 1ML. Multiply this by 55 and that's 55,000,000,000 x 1 litre bottles of water that could possibly be used for this project. That's a lot of water....





This is what the Peel River looked like during the recent drought

9. The huge transport vehicles used in construction and transportation are going to be using the narrow local roads which are shared by the locals and others. During the peak of construction (from month 6 to 14) the number of vehicles associated with the wind farm development, using the preferred access route is predicted to exceed the above traffic volumes. During this specific time, which is limited in duration, peak morning traffic levels are expected to reach up to 109 light vehicle trips and 18 large vehicles within one hour (refer 10.3.5 EIS).
10. The road upgrades or modifications to accommodate the turbines and blade transport will be disruptive, noisy, dusty and will also require the removal of established trees. Given the harsh country environment and the lack of water the replacement growth of any tree will take years to regenerate. It would be extremely disappointing to lose the large trees growing in the middle of Jenkins Street near the school.
11. The internal roads included in the wind farm footprint will have direct impacts to habitat (refer table 9-8 EIS) and the biodiversity.
12. The disruption to the local communities of Nundle and Hanging Rock during construction, which could last up to 2 years.
13. Areas of the footprint for this project experience strong wind gusts, ice and snow during the winter months. The testing done for the EIS on wind however was not taken during a worst case scenario and is not a true indication of what the elements of this region produce in terms of wind and poor weather conditions.

14. The likely occurrence of blade throw is minimal however should this happen to a turbine located close to the Ben Halls Gap Nature Reserve or Ben Halls Gap State Nundle forest it may cause an unexpected bushfire hazard.
15. It appears that the bushfire APZ for the turbines are to be located extremely close to Ben Halls Gap Nature Reserve. Has part of this reserve been allocated to the APZ (refer section 13.4 EIS). If so, how is this possible without community consultation.
16. The EIS suggests rehabilitation of disturbance areas following decommissioning are to be reinstated as pre development agricultural land capacity or similar. What about large trees and other established areas of flora and fauna. The mitigation measures set out (table 9.5 EIS) for flora and fauna protection and habitat suggest that measures will be considered. It does not state that they will be implemented. This is of great concern to me as it is not clear exactly what measures will be taken.
The biodiversity in the area can never be the same after construction.
17. The number of Snow Gums, Silvertop Stringybark, Yellow & White Box gums and other species (table 9-10 EIS) tabled for offsets. These offsets are not replacement vegetation and cannot be accepted as that.
Regeneration takes time and water.....it could be many, many years in an area such as this.
18. The estimated jobs created by this project around 84 jobs during its operational life ie. 31 direct jobs and 53 on-flow jobs (refer 23.5 EIS). No one in the community actually knows what these jobs are so how can we educate in time. If it is like the last project of State significance in the area (the Chaffey Dam Augmentation), very few locals were employed during construction. Most were brought in as contractors, some even came from other states in Australia.
19. The project will play a key role in reducing carbon emissions (Clause 23.6 EIS) but how many emissions does a project such as this create during the manufacture and construction process. There is a lot of steel, concrete, trucks and transportation involved, all producing emissions. Not to mention the amount of water needed during construction for watering down dust, producing concrete, roads and steel components etc. These factors must be seriously considered before we can claim these projects as reducing emissions.
20. The strong public benefits of such a project will not immediately benefit me as a local landowner and I struggle to realise how it could.
21. The project will assist the Commonwealth and NSW Government to fulfil their targets and policies to increase renewable energy supply and reduce carbon emissions. The Project represents a positive addition to the National Electricity Market (NEM) which will have an approximate energy generating capacity of

420 MW. This is great, but is this wind farm really needed considering the other wind farms and solar farms going ahead in the New England and Upper Hunter regions?

22. What guarantee do the residents of the area have that this project will supply them with energy at a reduced rate? Most residents are looking at solar as an alternative to paying for energy from a selected supplier. Supply and usage costs are extremely high through these providers.

Nundle and Hanging Rock do not need wind farms to attract visitors. The community has worked hard to attract visitors in the past with several successful events and festivals throughout the year, plus keeping the town a 'tidy town'.

I ask that you contemplate the above concerns and acknowledge my strong opposition to the proposed Hills of Gold Wind Farm Project. This is a matter close to my heart and I will not give up on saving what I consider to be the real 'Hills Of Gold'.



Please keep Nundle a picturesque town

Yours Sincerely,

A local landowner who is concerned about the future of Nundle & Hanging Rock.