

I oppose the proposed Hills of Gold wind farm on the following grounds.

## **Tourism**

“Wind Farms can attract tourism, but may conflict with other tourism features”

From Exploring Community Acceptance of Rural Wind Farms in Australia: A Snapshot, CSIRO publications 2012

It is relevant to talk about a wind farm providing a non-tourist rural locality with additional tourism. In contrast, a rural locality with pre existing tourist attractions, is likely to suffer damage by the construction of a wind farm. Particularly where the existing tourism relies on the aesthetic of the landscape and old world charm. This is the case in Nundle. The town has successfully promoted the Hills of Gold, linking the history with the aesthetics of the mountains glowing gold as the sun sets. The town derives a significant part of its income from tourists who come to Nundle to experience various rural pursuits, a sense of the past, and the aesthetics of the landscape. An award winning and thriving town whose success stands to be negatively impacted by the construction of this wind farm.

## **Ridgelines**

The wind Farm Commissioner in the 1999 Annual report, found that “locating wind turbines on the top of hills or ridges, while optimum for capturing the wind resource, can have a greater impact on visual amenity, may lead to specific noise and shadow flicker scenarios for residents in the valley beneath and may have other dislocation impacts on the community” The proposed Hills of Gold wind farm could be the gold standard for the type of problematic wind farm the Commissioner is describing. Perhaps the Commissioners report should be mandatory reading for wind farm developers, so these identified problems are not endlessly repeated at great cost to the developers, the industry, and the communities.

## **A Social Licence to Operate**

In Exploring Community Acceptance of Rural Wind Farms in Australia: A Snapshot, CSIRO publications 2012, the CSIRO researchers place

emphasis on the “social licence to operate” as the central issue to the success or failure of a proposed wind farm, and to the overall take up and success of the wind industry in Australia.

“ overall, the study findings suggest that community acceptance of wind farms could be increased by developers intentionally adopting a ‘social licence to operate’ approach... There is evidence that increased community acceptance from such approaches would result in increased approval and installation of wind farms, and would thus increase the possibility of achieving Australia’s Renewable Energy Target in a cost-effective way.”

The Ethics Centre define social licence as, at its simplest, the acceptance granted to a company or organisation by the community. The Ethics Centre go on to say that “too often, social licence is thought to be something that can be purchased, like an offset. Big companies with controversial practices often give out community grants and investments...Here a social licence to operate might be seen as a kind of transaction where community acceptance can be bought. Of course, such an approach will often fail precisely because it is conceived as a calculated and cynical payoff.”

Wind farms need to be located in carefully selected sites which minimise impacts. The proponent’s task of gaining community approval is therefore an easier and achievable one.

Where a proposed wind farm is opposed strongly by the majority of the community directly impacted by its construction, it has failed to achieve a licence to operate and should not be allowed to proceed.

Allowing construction of a wind farm that does not have a social licence to operate jeopardises the overall success of the uptake of wind generation in Australia.