

## OBJECTION by Kelly Jaffer

I am Hanging Rock artist who objects to the Hills of Gold Wind Farm Proposal. Leaving the inner west of Sydney in 2008 with my young Indigenous children, I came to Hanging Rock seeking respite from the urban landscape and followed an inner call to live and paint the natural landscape of Hanging Rock. I wanted to raise my children with a connection to country. I chose this place, Hanging Rock, for its rural beauty and perspective of the natural world; old growth tree lined ridges, deep gullies contoured with running creeks, native bushlands abundant with wildlife. I wanted to live immersed in nature and share this deep love of the natural world with my children. I found that place, our home in the hills of Hanging Rock. My objection to the Hills of Gold Wind Farm stems from the threat of destruction which an industrial project like this brings to our home and its dynamic ecosystem. The natural ecosystem of Hanging Rock and its neighbouring surroundings must be preserved.

Coming from an earth centred worldview, I care for the preservation of our planet which includes the earth-sustaining practices of renewables. I do not object to renewable energy but object to the siting of this renewable project and the potential environmental damage that this project will bring to the present nature and resources which exists in this area. There are pockets of eucalypt forest, woodlands and grasslands that would be cleared during the construction period of the proposed Hills of Gold Wind Farm. Referencing the Environmental Impact Statement of the proposed Hills of Gold Wind Farm (2020, page 147); *513 hectares of the Development Footprint will be disturbed or cleared for the transport route, wind farm and transmission lines with 206 hectares of native vegetation cleared entirely.* A further reference from the Environmental Impact Statement of the proposed Hills of Gold Wind Farm (2020, page 194); *Thirteen threatened terrestrial fauna species were directly observed within the Development Footprint.* We need to hold on to the precious ecosystems that are still flourishing like this one here at Hanging Rock and its surrounds, where nature is still in a delicate balance and sustaining all living species, flora and fauna alike. There are other places which would more appropriately site wind turbine projects with significantly less environmental impact to natural ecosystems than is inevitable with the proposed Hills of Gold Wind Farm.

Valuing my community connection, it has been disturbing to see the negative impact that this wind energy proposal has had on the social bond between people that live in our community. The proposed Hills of Gold Wind Farm has divided our community and damaged the strong social capital which exists in the Hanging Rock, Nundle and surrounding community. A community which once thrived on people banding together to live harmoniously, sharing positive relationships based on trust, respect, kindness and reciprocity has now been fractured. I object to the proposed Hills of Gold Wind Farm on the basis of the destruction it has already caused and potentially will continue to cause on the social fabric of this community. Echoing the perspective of The National Wind Farm Commissioner (2017, Annual Report, page 44); *There may be opportunities to select and prioritise wind projects, from the current pipeline of wind energy projects, which better balance the likelihood of acceptance of the project by the surrounding community.*

As a commuting worker and parent of children who take the early morning High School bus routes from Hanging Rock to Tamworth Monday to Friday, I am concerned by the increase in light and heavy vehicle traffic that Hills of Gold Wind Farm proposes. Increased traffic on Barry Road, Nundle Road and Lindsay's Gap Road equates to increased commuting travel time during morning and evening peak travel times as well as the increased danger of sharing narrow and winding roads with heavy vehicles. Referencing the Environmental Impact Statement for Hills of Gold Wind Farm (2020, page 234); *for the estimated thirteen-month construction period, Nundle and surrounds would*

*experience an extra 240 daily light vehicle, worker bus and heavy vehicle truck movements.* For Hanging Rock commuters like myself this equates to an increase from 10 vehicles per hour to 156 vehicles per hour in the morning and in the evening peak, from 38 vehicles per hour to 184 vehicles per hour. These increased vehicle movements and its impact on commuting time and traffic danger for commuters and students on school buses are further reasons why I object to the proposed Hills of Gold Wind Farm.

To finish, I love living at Hanging Rock. I have found my soul place which nurtures and renews the deepest part of who I am. I feel a palpable connection to this mountain and to the trees and animals that live here too. I love that on any given day or night I can see wallabies, kangaroos, echidnas, gliders, spotted-tailed quolls, lizards, snakes, kookaburras, mountain parrots, black cockatoos, white cockatoos, wrens and wagtails. I love that the birds wake me in the morning and stay loud with bird song through the whole day till sun setting. I love that the frogs sing through the dark night. I love that the mist touches the earth when the easterly rolls in and I even love the fierce cold gale that the south wind screams. I love that I can walk through bushland where I can feel the pulse of ancient times when our Indigenous ancestors cared for country and walked on the same land. I love the rocky outcrops and rocky creeks that show sparkling glimmers of the mineral rich geology that is deep beneath here. My final point is that my heart connection for this place, Hanging Rock is so tangible that I want nothing to change that. Selflessly, I want this beautiful place to remain as it is, so beautiful, so heart expanding. I want it to remain as is for my children to share and feel with their children and their children and all who seek to be touched by the nature in all its beauty which exists in this place. We must protect places like this which keep our collective soul cared for. We must protect the hills of gold from industrial ruin masked as renewable energy with a life span of 25 years. We must protect the hills of gold and all that lives within and around it, for all eternity.

These are my grounds for objecting to the proposed Hills of Gold Wind Farm.