

I OBJECT to the Hills of Gold Wind Farm (SSD – 9679).

I live approximately 30 km south of the proposed wind farm on the Isis River on which I rely for my stock and domestic water.

I am extremely concerned by the amount of soil disturbance on the top of the range that will be required to build each turbine and the associated infrastructure. The soils on the ridgeline and surrounding areas have been classified by soil scientists as highly erodible and dispersive. They are classified as Class 7/8 which is defined as extremely low capability land incapable of sustaining any land use apart from nature conservation. The spoils are NOT to be disturbed. Class 8 includes slopes greater than 50% gradient which is typical of the top of the Range. These soil types will readily erode where they are disturbed or exposed. Land slips on the steeper slopes of the ridgeline are common and are visible from the road.

Each turbine will sit on a 25m diameter concrete pad. Due to the steepness and gradients along the ridgeline that they will have to effectively cut off the top of the ridge to provide the flat areas and depth needed for the foundations and other infrastructure. All these unstable soils will be disturbed and exposed to rain, which is heavy along the top of the Range. These soils will not hold these huge blocks of concrete.

At least 13 turbines are sited in the catchment of the Isis and Barnard Rivers. The Pages and Perry's Creeks are tributaries feeding the Isis River. There will be a huge impact on the Isis River of soil run off and sedimentation caused by the massive soil disturbance required to build the wind farm. Even now, when it rains, you can see the very brown water of Perry's Creek where it joins the clear water of the Isis River, turning the Isis into a very muddy stream. This is a result of the clearing done up at the wind farm site to date, but it will be much worse following the massive soil disturbance required to build the wind farm.

This project is akin to building about 50 structures the size of the tallest buildings in Sydney next to the Three Sisters at Katoomba. You are destroying a pristine site on the Great Dividing Range overlooking the Timor Valley. This stunning landscape should be preserved for the enjoyment of future generations. This wind farm will destroy the environment we are trying to save.

Most of the 50 odd wind farms, each 230 m high, will have red lights on top of the Great Dividing Range which will operate 24/7, creating a city nightscape in the middle of two national parks, Crawney Pass and the Ben Halls Gap Nature Reserve.

The roads approaching the proposed site, especially from the south, are mostly unsealed roads in poor condition with many one lane only bridges and narrow winding sections which are not suitable for oversized/over mass vehicles. There will be a sizable impact on all communities along the Timor/Crawney/Gundy roads as it is a quicker route to the construction sites for vehicles and trucks. No residents along these roads have been consulted.

The project consists of 23km of 230 m high wind turbines. How will birds and bats know where to pick the gaps? Eagles will be decimated by the wind turbines.

The proposed site is in a bushfire prone area. The bushfires are hard to fight because of the steep terrain. The wind turbines can start fires and seriously compromise aerial firefighting. Fuels and oils kept on site at the wind farm are another risk. Transmission lines also cause bushfires. The asset owner of the transmission lines is responsible for reducing the fuel load beneath the transmission lines to a width of 90m but can they afford to carry out this responsibility?

Wind farms only last 10 to 15 years. There is no detail about who will be responsible for decommissioning this one, how much will it cost and where the money will come from. Engie says it will only remove 50cm of the concrete foundations. No rehabilitation to its former tall-forested environment could ever occur with a tree root depth of less than 50cm. Erosion will remain a huge issue for the steep sloping land into the Timor/Isis River Valley.

If the IPC approves this Application I ask for the following Conditions of Consent.

- 1) Condition of Consent B21 (b) (iv) needs to be amended and strengthened to include "avoidance of impacts on the quality of water flowing into the Chaffey and Glenbawn Catchments AND the Isis River."
- 2) Condition of Consent added to B21 (b) to include "avoidance of impacts on the quality of water flowing into Perry's Creek, Pages Creek, Dead Eye Creek and Whites Creek" to protect the interests of the Isis river communities.
- 3) Condition of Consent for removal of 17 turbines, as indicated by DPE report, due to noncompliance with visual, noise and biodiversity guidelines be upheld. Remove WTGs 9, 10, 11, 24, 28, 42, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63
- 4) Condition of Consent that there be no use of Upper Hunter Shire Council (UHSC) local roads.
- 5) Condition of Consent for removal of 17 additional turbines due to serious concern about proximity of turbines to important habitat features (tree canopies, hollow bearing trees, and the BHGMR) and the resultant threats to bat and birds. Removal of WTGs 6, 9, 16, 18, 21, 22, 32, 33, 40, 42, 43, 49, 50, 51, 58, 59, 61. - as posed by BCS and NPWS in the DPE report point 206, page 63.
- 6) Condition of Consent should state that a suitable and meaningful decommissioning bond must be instituted which starts at the commencement of construction and continues throughout the operation of the project ; the "within 18 month timeframe" must stand firm as the beginning of decommissioning with a finished rehabilitation timeframe of no more than 3 years from the rehabilitation commencement date; all rehabilitation objectives should remain firm and not be able to be waived by the Planning Secretary; additionally all the underground concreting and other underground infrastructure must be removed to enable the restoration of the development site to its natural vegetation and landscape value.

The consequences and impacts of this development to the native flora and fauna, the human inhabitants, its waterways and aquatic life, the heritage are far too great, serious and irreversible and the IPC should reject the application for the Hills of Gold Wind Farm.