

I grew up in Nundle and returned in 2017 to live here and start a small artistic business which operates as a gallery and studio on the weekends.

My business, Stormcrow Studio is based in what was originally the village butcher shop, a heritage building in the heart of the village. I am a member of the Nundle Business Tourism and Marketing Group and have been a member of the NBTMG executive for several years. It is my experience that the hard work of the business community and local organisations have contributed to the thriving and indisputably unique visitor experience Nundle and Hanging Rock offers.

Tourism

Along with most businesses in the village centre, I rely significantly on the healthy tourist industry Nundle is known for. The feedback I get from customers, who are in the main visitors, is that they love the “feel” of Nundle and Hanging Rock, they have a sense of “stepping away” from the industrial world into a place of calm and beauty. The village offers a unique experience of gold-mining heritage and a feel of old Australia alongside a strong connection to country and landscape. All this is being put into jeopardy by this proposal and I can only surmise the industrialisation of our landscape both on the ridgeline and within the village confines will have a devastating long term and permanent effect on my business, my livelihood and my well-being.

I am an artist, this country is my muse, the light, the sweeping vistas, the dark night skies, the peace and quiet, the tight-knit community are all factors in making my livelihood possible (and enjoyable!). I have previously hosted printmaking workshops in my studio, I have collaborated with community members on creative projects that enhance our tourism brand including being commissioned by NBTMG to create a vintage-style travel poster for Nundle and Hanging Rock and most recently creating a large mural artwork for Nundle’s Community Garden. Through my work and the artistic work of my mother, Gwenda Hague, I believe Stormcrow Studio enhances Nundle’s offering as a unique destination village. I don’t know if my business would survive the building of these turbines, or the irrevocable changes wrought on our villages. I believe my heart would not be in it anymore, nor within the community and certainly the beating heart in our epic landscape will have devastatingly dimmed beyond repair.

I do not think the proponent, or the Department have accurately depicted the cultural significance Nundle and Hanging Rock holds regionally and nationally. We are not a tiny speck on the map of Australia that no one has heard of, we are the jewel in the crown of Tamworth, we are a much-visited, much-loved destination that holds significant meaning to those people who have chosen to call it home and for those who choose to visit time and again. This value is hard to describe and much harder to quantify, nearly impossible – but it exists here in abundance, simply put, we derive meaning from it.

Heritage & Biodiversity

Hanging Rock has long been called “Tamworth’s Katoomba”...first described as such in a report dating from 1889, and I quote from that article: “It was not, perhaps, so rugged as the view of the mountains at Katoomba, but the **extent of the country taken in by the eye was far more beautiful than many of the show places of the Blue Mountains.**” In other parts of the world and Australia, authorities have legislated against wind farms in areas of high scenic beauty and environmental sensitivity. I believe Nundle, Hanging Rock, Crawney and Timor well and truly meet this criteria and deserve to be protected from the industrialisation and destruction a project like this will cause.

The rich history of the area is still present and accessible to both locals and visitors as we are lucky enough to retain 24 State and Local heritage significant buildings and historical sites. These sit alongside outstanding natural heritage features such as Ben Halls Gap Nature Reserve which is listed as part of the Register of the National Estate and by the NSW National Trust as ‘Ben Halls Gap old growth forest landscape conservation area’ in recognition of its outstanding natural heritage features as well as the Crawney Pass National Park. As locals, we are proud of our biodiverse natural heritage, we are witness to it daily in the eagles that soar high above the mountains, to the terrifying screech of quolls at night when camping in the bush. We are immensely proud to acknowledge we are home to such an abundance of rare species, both flora and fauna, that we will never actually get to personally see (BHG Nature Reserve has (quite rightly) restricted access). To imagine nature just doing her thing in abundance, undisturbed, is a powerful thought.

We are also home to two significant natural heritage landmarks, the Hanging Rock granite rock face (originally known as “The Hanging Rocks”) that dominates the ridgeline, and Yellow Rock, a distinctive landform with ribbons of sandstone. Both landmarks have significance in terms of Nundle and Hanging Rock history. The Hanging Rock outcrop was a navigation beacon for miners and bullock drays crossing the Crawney Pass, heading for the gold fields in the 19th Century. Yellow Rock, owned by the Worley family, is a long-standing local landmark, the destination for horse rides and picnics, evidenced by European engravings of names and dates, the earliest being 1874.

Places like Nundle and Hanging Rock are unique in telling the great Australian story, we hold significant value, both natural and historic, which needs to be preserved. Our value is in what we will offer future generations when every other place is developed beyond repair in the name of renewable energy and progress.

Visual Impact and Amenity:

I do not believe the DPHI has accurately represented the visual (and noise) impacts to the community. The turbines on the ridgeline (including the associated infrastructure of roads, transverse track and ancillary structures) will dominate the landscape both day and night and the proposed transport routes through the village will decimate the village character. Jenkins street is not the beginning of Nundle proper. The DPHI has been remiss in ignoring

the community's request to have the visual impact zone extended to 20kms. When I see the mountains (visible on the approach to Nundle) THAT is the moment I feel home, when my spirits lift and I am amazed at the beauty of the ridgeline unfolding.

The transport route through the villages, in particular the bypass for OSOM vehicles behind the pub (on a flood plain!), is wholly inappropriate for a village of this scale and nature. We have an avenue of beautiful trees at the entrance to Nundle, showing their colours throughout the seasons, it is an evocative entrance completely defining the kind of experience Nundle offers. To remove these trees, to build an industrial size road, to potentially remove a house to accommodate this, to effectively slash our village in half, is a travesty that will redefine this character irreversibly.

The community has not been provided with visual impact montages of the transport routes through the village, nor been properly consulted regarding the changes to the volume of construction traffic via Oakenville road. The DPHI's recommendation has proposed significant changes to the construction traffic through the villages of Nundle and Hanging Rock and I can only believe, they have assumed that we will just all be okay with it. We are not okay with it. We are appalled by these traffic and transport "solutions". I would also note, I am disappointed that no noise assessments have taken place for the residents or businesses on Jenkins Street to account for the construction phase, so can only assume the DPHI believes we, and our visitors, will just deal with that too.

I do believe that the DPHI and Engie simply negate our visual impact and amenity due to the size of the population compared to the space we occupy. We, of course, are referred to as receivers and the area of the project is described as having a "low-density of receivers"...which effectively lowers the impact, does it not? There aren't as many people looking (or receiving!) are there? Absolutely, unequivocally, no! The reason we have moved here is FOR the space, FOR the "low-density", it is also why people visit (and keep returning) – it is FOR the landscape, FOR the views, FOR the bush land, FOR the environment, FOR the heritage – without turbines. I would argue we would be even *greater* affected by this project BECAUSE of the low density of "receivers"...we are here for a reason, we want to look. We look everyday. Why do we get to be discounted because our population is small? Why does our amenity fall down the list of impacts?

This would be the view from my studio and gallery:



This photomontage is from Appendix F Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment of the EIS. Unfortunately, the aspect of the original (below) very deliberately tried to minimise the visual impact to the village, by choosing a very distant viewpoint. The original can be found in Appendix F LVIA App D PM 02-03 of the original EIS. I have simply zoomed in to where I would be standing at my studio (close to where the red car is) and lowered the brightness/contrast to give a more accurate depiction of how my amenity would be affected. No view is protected, there is no mitigation for this except to be inside. The scale of these turbines stands in direct infringement to my amenity and the amenity and values of my business.

Photomontage 02



Proposed View - 60 degree Field of View

(You'll have to take my word for it, but this photomontage actually does contain wind turbines on the hills – this is a direct screenshot of the appendix)

Community consultation

On no occasion have I been personally contacted by Engie representatives, they have not visited my premises, purchased any of my wares, asked me questions to gauge how this proposal might impact my business or simply engaged with my offering in Nundle (that of a creative space reflecting the artists perspective). Any communication with them has been via bad-faith surveys that have been so obviously biased it has been insulting to partake...but partake we did. Only to be told that we aren't educated enough to appreciate the benefits of the proposal, and then being consistently characterised as a vocal minority.

Engie have consistently demonstrated a lack of integrity when dealing with our community and cannot seem to acknowledge they do not have social licence here. I guess that's their prerogative as a huge multi-national company...what I am disappointed in, however, is the lack of meaningful acknowledgment from the DPHI. I do believe they think we (the objecting majority) should be happy with the exclusions and recommendations they have

made and be done with it. Thank goodness the function of the IPC exists, if only to have our voices heard one final, desperate time.

I remind the IPC, the Nundle Business Tourism and Marketing Group have objected consistently to this proposal in its many variations. The majority of community have consistently demonstrated their objection to this proposal in their well reasoned, well researched, articulate objections to the EIS and later Amendment and now, presentations to the IPC. The Tamworth City Council have objected unanimously on several occasions and also presented their objections to the IPC. This project does not have social licence.

The visual impact of 47 turbines on our ridge-line along with the associated infrastructure, clearing and extreme cut-and-fill works on our range, the proposed transports routes ploughing through the heart of the village will destroy the high scenic value of Nundle, Hanging Rock, Crawney and Timor and wreck the very magic that attracts both locals and visitors to the area. The very character of our villages and landscape is in jeopardy. The very nature of our tourism industry is being undermined. Nothing in the DPHI's recommendation addresses this adequately. The economic benefits are overstated and do nothing to properly acknowledge the industries already operating successfully in Nundle. No transport route is acceptable – the impacts are unresolvable. I ask the IPC to reject the Hills of Gold Wind Farm proposal.