

I write as president of the Nundle Business Tourism and Marketing Group Inc (NBTMG) that funds and creates marketing communications for Nundle NSW, including an annual marketing plan, logo, brand, website, brochure, social media, and print advertising.

NBTMG has been established for more than a decade. We celebrated our 10th anniversary by commissioning a vintage inspired tourism poster and postcard for Nundle in 2021.

I respect that there are two members of NBTMG that are associated with the wind energy development, and there are a few members that have previously written supporting submissions during public exhibition periods.

A clear majority of members have previously written objecting submissions, signed petitions objecting to the proposal, are members of Hills of Gold Preservation Inc, and own non-associated dwellings.

NBTMG receives annual funding from Destination Tamworth in addition to member contributions, and we work with Destination Tamworth to cross promote in marketing communications for the greater benefit of regional tourism. Everything we do is made possible by volunteering, apart from paid advertising, photography and design.

In 2012 our members and Destination Tamworth contributed \$25,000 to receive a dollar for dollar \$25,000 grant from Inland Tourism NSW to fund a \$50,000 a Nundle brand, and 12 month marketing campaign.

Our most successful marketing activity is our Nundle Destination Video. It communicates what makes Nundle and Hanging Rock distinctive, and why people choose to live and visit here.

I ask the Commissioners to view the video to understand the Nundle Brand; the peace, nature, heritage, food and wine, and events.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j1kA-jJe8G0&t=3s>

In the past 12 months Nundle has hosted at least one workshop per month on homesteading skills like sourdough making, fermenting; wellbeing retreats on mindful movement and breathwork; and creative skills like songwriting, eco plant-dyeing and hatmaking.

Our reputation for pooling marketing funds for the benefit of all has seen us share our experience on panels for University of New England, The Plains and Country Outback NSW, and Liverpool Plains and Glen Innes Chambers of Commerce.

Other communities ask how we achieve what we do.
It comes down to Trust, Goodwill, and Motivation to Volunteer.

The Hills of Gold Wind Farm has damaged all of those.

February 7th, 2024 was the six year anniversary of being invited to a meeting of community members to be told Wind Energy Partners was investigating a wind energy project in the area.

One of the first things the developer's representative said was, "If the community doesn't want it, it won't happen."

The only time a project representative has come into our business in six years was to confront me for my part in organising a public meeting in March, 2018.

I've attended multiple information sessions hosted by EnergyCo, NSW Farmers Association and DPHI that discuss the importance of social licence.

And yet the Department's recommendation for approval flies in the face of evidence of lack of social licence for Hills of Gold Wind Farm.

The DPHI Assessment Report and Recommended Conditions of Consent underestimate the Transport, Biodiversity and Visual impacts of Hills of Gold Wind Farm impacting residents, pre-existing tourism businesses, and visitors.

Our visitor experience encompasses the landscape surrounding Nundle and Hanging Rock. Whether you live here or visit, the experience of arriving home, or visitor awe, is about the range.

The wind farm would be visible on the approach to Hanging Rock and Nundle in all directions. It would be visible from Nundle village, Hanging Rock Lookout, and The DAG Sheep Station, a wedding venue and place of retreat for workshops and conferences.

The entrance to Nundle village would be industrialised and valued mature street trees removed.

Construction traffic on Barry Rd threatens to disturb the Crown Land recreation area Sheba Dams that is popular with tourists and locals for the peaceful ambience and ease of being that Nundle and Hanging Rock are known for.

CASA advises that turbines would have 200 candelas, steady, red Aviation Hazard Lighting at least 900m apart. While the LVIA considers 200 candela fittings are not significant beyond 3km, our community has no idea what the real impact will be on residents or visitors.

Steady red hazard lighting on about half of the wind turbines will be visible from houses and approaches around the villages.

Our family and other community members have traveled to Sapphire Wind Farm between Glen Innes and Inverell to see what 200 candela hazard lighting looks like and it is not what we want to live with, or impose on our tourists.

The Visual Independent Expert Review (pg 24) by O'Hanlon and Francis confirms what the majority of our members have been saying for six years:

“The effect of the turbine array on the extended ridgeline of the Great Dividing Range which is a Key Landscape Feature within the broader landscape will partially industrialise the character of LCU 05 ‘Forested Mountain Ranges.’ The resultant change of character to a combination of Natural Appearing and Wind Energy Character is significant. The proposed change will be critical to the ongoing community perception of the value of the surrounding landscape. The effect of this significant change of character should be carefully considered in the evaluation of the overall project suitability and determination of Development Consent.”

We know that the SEPP recognises that wind energy developments have potential for negative impacts on regional cities like Tamworth and limit developments to outside 10km of CBD. Yet this proposal is 8km from Nundle and 3km from Hanging Rock. These communities contribute to the liveability of Tamworth and the visitor economy.

<https://www.caselaw.nsw.gov.au/decision/18cad2273c26f3078ac9c016>

28/12/23

In December last year we saw NSW Land and Environment Court Refusal of Consent of 10MW Burrundulla Solar Farm 2.4km east of Mudgee

Mid Western Regional Council considered it an alien feature in the existing landscape, which would be irreversibly changed by the development.

Senior Commissioner Susan Dixon ruled the development not suitable for the site because “The development, whilst permissible, is uncharacteristic and will intrude into the landscape.”

Commissioner Dixon also said that the ‘failure to consider community views or values as part of landscape character was a significant flaw’ and ‘sense of place has not been sufficiently factored into her assessment.’ The same could be said here.

The Department has recommended approval of this project partly because of its capacity to connect to the existing grid fast.

Muswellbrook Shire Council has requested a new Condition that transport of oversize overmass components, via the Lindsay’s Gap Rd, cannot commence before the opening of Muswellbrook Bypass, not expected before the end of 2027.

I do not accept the Department Assessment that 47 wind turbines on the mountain range would have ‘limited impacts on tourism’.

The Visual Impact on the approach and surrounding Nundle, Hanging Rock, Crawney and Timor is dismissed because of low population. It doesn’t take into account the 100,000 annual tourists to Nundle and Hanging Rock.

The impact of two years of construction traffic and roadworks on tourism is dismissed.

It has already had a material impact on the tourism economy.

Community division associated with Hills of Gold Wind Farm has already meant community members cannot work together on committees and it contributed to the Go for Gold Festival Committee being disbanded.

This \$40,000 event generated more than \$350,000 in turnover for Nundle Businesses and stallholders. It was the major annual fundraising event for most Nundle community groups.

Our community has achieved much in the past by applying for federal, state and local government grants, without the environmental, social and economic impacts of a wind energy project. The architect designed \$110k playground installed in 2010 is one example.

Events now tend to be organised by community members either supporting the wind farm, or opposing the wind farm. This does not bode well for administration of a Community Benefit Fund.

Any suggestion that Hills of Gold Energy Project could be a tourism attraction or host tourism events, is mythical, and not based on lived tourism experience of addressing public liability risk, finding staff, staff accommodation, and living the marketing of a business 24/7.

The success of any tourism business is people buy-in. If the local majority do not support it, no amount of public relations spin will make it work.

An agritourism leader gave me the following advice, “Wind farms are not a major attraction for visitors. Doesn’t appear in any tourism stats at all. Nature and agriculture attract visitation, not wind farms.”

This is not a decision between 64, 62, 47 turbines, or some number in between, it is a choice between 47 turbines or none at all.

I ask you, Commissioners, to protect our pre-existing tourism industry for the benefit of Nundle, Hanging Rock and neighbouring regions, and Reject Hills of Gold Wind Farm.