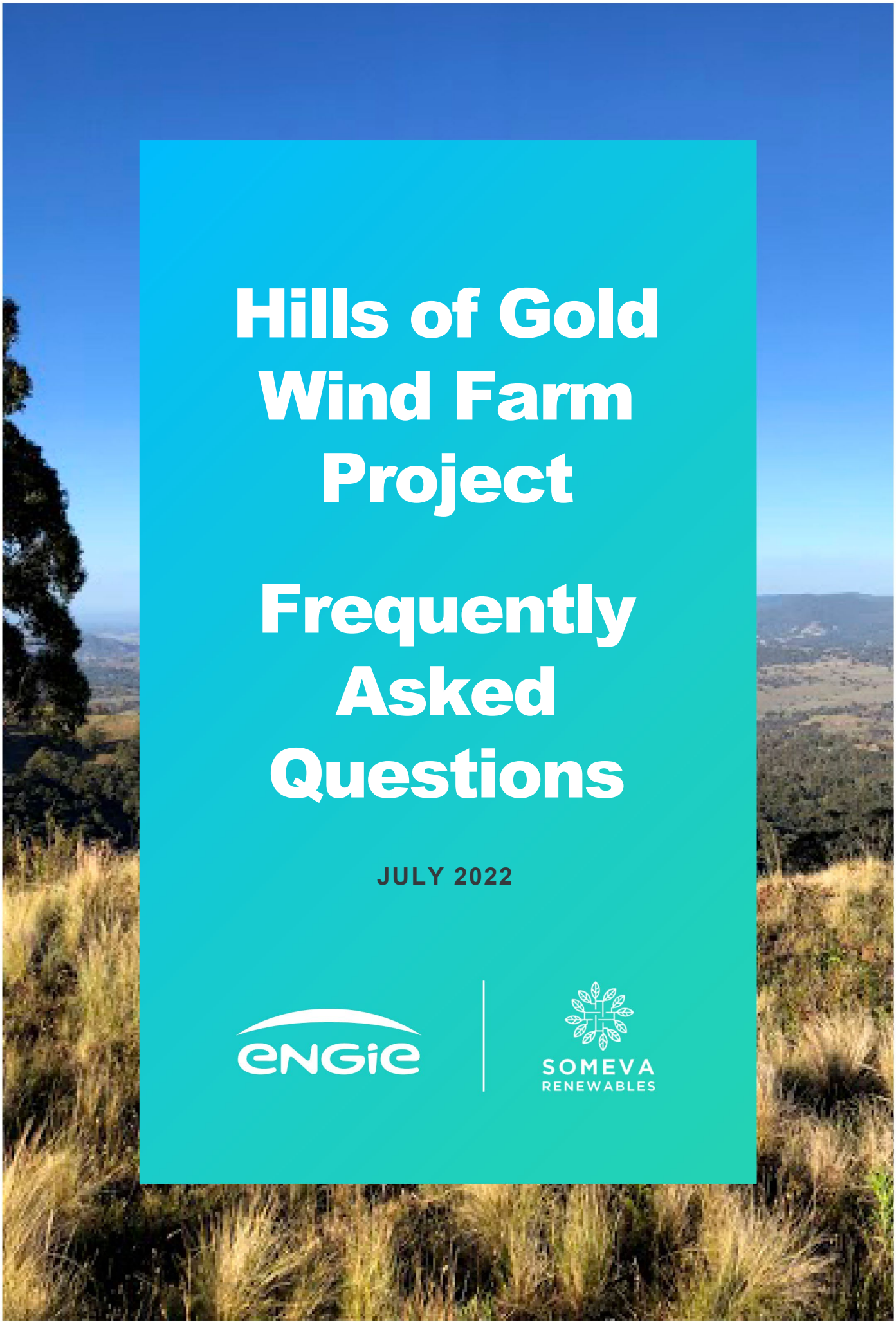


Hills of Gold Wind Farm Project

Frequently Asked Questions

JULY 2022

ENGIE | SOMEVA RENEWABLES

Project Design and Development

Project Details

How many wind turbines are currently proposed for the project?

The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) submitted was for 70 turbines, however during the Response to Submissions assessment process we have committed to removing five turbines, reducing the number to 65. The reduction of these five turbines addressed concerns relating to biodiversity and visual impacts. Removal of two of the turbines has directly resulted in removing impact to two threatened bat species.

How many landholders are directly involved in the project?

- 4 landholders with full turbines
- 4 neighbours that receive benefit from turbines
- 4 landholders along the transmission line
- 14 transport consents
- 8 landowners offered biodiversity stewardship sites

How many neighbouring landholders are involved in the project?

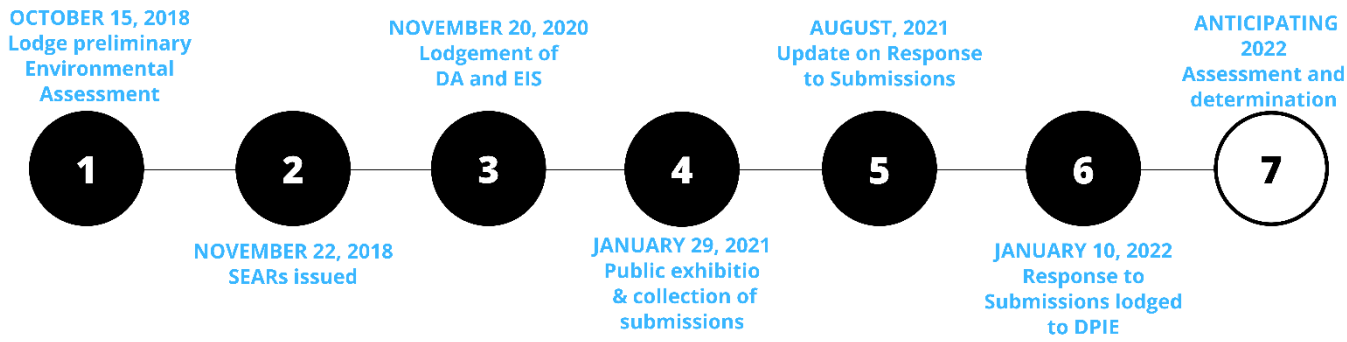
- 10 neighbour agreements

What are the next steps in the development approval process?

ENGIE and Someva have now officially lodged its Response to Submissions to the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE).

This document addresses the public submissions received in response to our EIS. You can read ENGIE's full Response to Submissions here.

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) will assess the Response to Submissions to provide a recommendation to the Independent Planning Commission.



Will this project be sold again?

At the present time, ENGIE intends to build, own and operate all of its renewable energy assets.

Traffic and Transport

Heavy Vehicle Traffic

What is the preferred oversize, over mass (OSOM) transport route?

Given the strong reservations by the Department of Planning and Environment and Tamworth Regional Council about the Devil's Elbow Bypass, the Project is reassessing the Over Size, Over Mass (OSOM) transport route.

An alternate route is being considered that uses Crawney Road. This route has become an option since the Project's main landowner purchased additional property which adjoins his existing property.

Extensive assessments on this proposed route are currently being carried out by industry experts, including traffic, biodiversity and cultural heritage studies.

If the route is deemed suitable, the Devil's Elbow Bypass would be removed from the Project, with the current road at Devil's Elbow suitable for use by smaller heavy vehicles and general construction access. The Devil's Elbow / Barry Road / Morrison's Gap Road route could also be used as a return route for OSOM vehicles after they have delivered components to site and the truck dollies have folded up to reduce the size of the vehicles.

Will OSOM traffic impact Tamworth or Muswellbrook?

There will be no impact to Tamworth from OSOM movements. The original OSOM transport route through Tamworth has now been removed from the Development Application to avoid impacting communities and residents in this area.

We're currently working with Muswellbrook Shire Council on route options for OSOM movements through Muswellbrook to ensure the least disruption to residents. We have a commitment to ensure all OSOM transport movements avoid school bus hours through Muswellbrook.

Local Traffic

What are the likely impacts to traffic through Nundle during construction?

Through discussions with the local community, we understand that residents are concerned about increased traffic, particularly during the construction period. In responding to these concerns we've made key changes to our traffic management plan, ensuring a **38% reduction** in daily traffic movements through Nundle during the construction period, improving safety and convenience. Some of the key changes will look to utilise car-pooling schemes by creating a temporary car park in Nundle to reduce the number of vehicles travelling to the project site each day. We will also (subject to TRC approval) install an additional pedestrian crossing in Nundle and employ parking restrictions in the town for project vehicles. We also have a commitment to ensure all OSOM transport movements avoid school bus hours through the town.

Head of Peel Road has also been removed as a project site access route. This will mean there will be less OSOM movements through the residential areas of Nundle.

What are the likely impacts to residents on Barry Road and Morrisons Gap Road during construction?

ENGIE is committed to roads safety, particularly to residents directly affected along access routes. We are undertaking further civil design to the upgrades required on Barry Road and Morrisons Gap Road to provide increased certainty for property owners. Currently, upgrades to Morrisons Gap Road include, widening to 5.5 metres, adding laybys and sealing the complete road. Ongoing surveys are being undertaken for OSOM transport movements and the refinement of swept path.

During project construction we will be utilising vehicle escorts, call-up protocols to residents along Morrisons Gap Road, and installing in-vehicle monitoring systems for regular vehicles accessing the project site.

We will also ensure there are no OSOM transport movements during school bus hours.

Project design and Biodiversity impact

Native Vegetation

How will native vegetation (including Koala and Wombat habitat) around the project site be impacted?

We share the community's concern about impacts to native vegetation and habitats of native wildlife and have engaged industry leading consultants to conduct biodiversity studies. Studies conducted over two years confirmed there will be no serious or irreversible biodiversity impacts from the Project.

Given concerns raised in public submissions, we've undertaken further biodiversity studies in 2021 and subsequently made key changes to our development application such as removing the Head of Peel Road as an access route and realigning transmission lines. These changes have reduced the total development footprint by **41%,** prevented nine waterway crossings from being impacted, and reduced the removal of high-condition native vegetation by 45%. There will also be a 17% reduction in the removal of threatened native species habitat, which will result in a **29% reduction** in the removal of koala habitat to 36ha.

It is worth noting that only two koalas were spotted during the extensive surveys carried out between 2018 and 2020, and that despite significant loss of habitat during the 2019/20 bushfires, there remains suitable habitat in neighbouring properties and over 3000ha in nearby nature reserves.

We have committed to a spotting and handling program to ensure any animals found prior to and during construction are relocated to high condition habitat in adjoining properties.

In addition, we are progressing with developing biodiversity stewardship sites, which will create wildlife corridors between existing National Parks.

All mitigation measures to protect biodiversity and native animals will be governed by environmental management plans that must be prepared and implemented by specialists, and approved by DPIE, should the project receive development approval.

What impact will the development have on native bats and their habitat?

Following further surveys and assessment of bat-roosting habitat, we have an increased understanding of the presence of bats on site. Through additional design work and the removal of wind turbines 19 and 23 we have reduced the number of wind turbines within bat-roosting habitat buffers from nine to two. We have also been undertaking further geomorphological assessment of caves and karsts to confirm their location in relation to the project site. We have also further increased bat habitat mapping, which has resulted in refined identification of roosting habitat.

We are progressing with developing biodiversity stewardship sites, which will create wildlife corridors between existing National Parks.

All mitigation measures to protect biodiversity and native animals will be governed by environmental management plans that must be prepared and implemented by specialists, and approved by DPIE, should the project receive development approval.

Water

How will the Peel catchment and Tamworth's water supply be impacted?

We assessed the project's impact on Peel Valley Catchment in our original Soils and Water Assessment, as part of our EIS. However, we are now currently undertaking further investigations. The details of our latest study of impacts on the Peel Valley Catchment will be available in an updated Soils and Water Assessment Report in our Response to Submissions, however it is important to note Water NSW's response to the EIS raised no concerns about impact on the catchment.

Will the wind farm impact on local springs in the area?

It is likely that springs will be intersected during the construction period, as this is common in infrastructure projects. Suitable mitigation measures will be implemented if and when this occurs.

To ensure that flows from the up-gradient catchment, including rainfall runoff or any identified springs, reach down-gradient watercourses and the Peel River, options including drainage rock blankets installed for seepage and culverts installed at key watercourse crossing points will be confirmed at the detailed design phase.

What water supply will be used during construction of the wind farm?

It is estimated that around 55ML of water will be required during the two-year construction phase of the wind farm. This water will be used to facilitate the construction of access tracks, concrete foundations, dust suppression and cleaning of the wind turbine components before erection.

There currently are four viable options available to source that water, including:

- Council water supply, with agreement from Council
- Extraction from a nearby existing landowner bore, with agreement from landowner
- Extraction from a new groundwater bore (once approval is sought)
- Extraction from a surface water source (Peel River)

The options will be reviewed by DPIE, with the project contractor then determining the best source based on the approved options.

End of project life and decommissioning

What will happen to the turbines and other infrastructure at the end of the project?

Decommissioning is always the responsibility of the wind farm owner. ENGIE will be required to remove all turbines and other fittings as part of the Government's approval conditions and landowner agreements.

As part of standard approval conditions, a decommissioning plan will be required to be submitted to the Department for approval before construction of the wind farm can commence.

The Clean Energy Council currently has a working group to manage re-use of materials at the wind farm end of life. A large proportion of wind farm components can be recycled for other uses.

Alternatively, if a business case arises near the end of life to 'repower' and extend the project, a new approval process would be initiated.

Nearer to the end of project life the community will be consulted about the process of decommissioning, its steps and potential impacts.

Community

Community Enhancement Fund

How will the community be compensated?

ENGIE is committed to supporting the local communities that host our projects. In response to feedback received by the local councils, we are committed to allocating $3,000 per wind turbine per year during operations to the Community Enhancement Fund (CEF) for Tamworth Regional Council and Upper Hunter Shire Council (funding shared between councils based on which Local Government Area wind turbines are located).

While there has been a reduction in the number of wind turbines, from 70 to 65, at this point in time the funds will be contributed annually based on 70 turbines. If further changes are made to the project layout or total number of turbines, then ENIGE will re-assess its total contribution to the CEF.

In addition to the CEF, we are also committing a one-off sponsorship fund of $150,000 to support community initiatives during construction, which will be administered by the Project. The Project will also be making additional commitments, including pedestrian crossings within Nundle (subject to council approval), traffic reduction schemes, implementation of voluntary speed limits and the provision of an Information Hub within Nundle for Project updates.

Will the community get discounted electricity?

Through our retail arm Simply Energy, ENGIE will offer all residents and local businesses within 20km of the Hills of Gold Wind Farm, an exclusive energy plan guaranteed to always be better that our best customer offer in market at the same time, with discounts off both electricity and gas usage and supply charges.

We'll make sure that the exclusive plan is always the best Simply Energy plan by reviewing it every 12 months to ensure it offers a 10% better discount than our best publicly available offer in the market at the time.

The exclusive energy offer will be available once the wind farm is constructed and starts operating.

How can the community be involved in the decision making of the Community Enhancement Fund?

A CEF Committee will be formulated that will have local Council representation, voluntary community members and an independent Chair. The way the funds will be disseminated within the community will be established once the committee has been formulated.

How will ENGIE ensure the construction sponsorship fund of $150,000 goes to the local community?

ENGIE is committed to working within the local townships of Nundle and Hanging Rock during construction to ensure that impact is minimised as much as possible. The purpose of the construction sponsorship fund is to provide benefit to the local community that would be advantageous to both individuals and groups within the area. This may include sports sponsorships, community gardens, enhancement to local areas, scholarships, and local community events. We would welcome any suggestions that the community may have to assist with identifying opportunities.

Local Economy, Business and Tourism

What are the economic benefits of the project?

ENGIE's Hills of Gold project will bring a number of economic benefits to the region. During the construction phase there will be 211 direct jobs and 404 indirect jobs. Once operational, the wind farm will provide 16 local jobs, as well as opportunities to develop new skills in the region within the growing renewable energy industry.

The construction and operation of the wind farm will require a range of skills including engineering, trades (electrical, mechanical, construction), transport, building material providers, equipment operators, consultants and administrative staff. ENGIE will encourage all contractors to employ local people where possible. Through the upgrade of local roads and waterway crossings, during the construction and operational life of the project, there will be investment and financial contributions of $104-million, through wages and profit to local communities and services.

Will the wind farm reduce the value of the land in Nundle?

A number of studies have been undertaken both within Australia and overseas, into the impact of wind farms on nearby property values.

In 2016, the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage commissioned a report into the impact of wind farms on property values. The report concluded that across the case studies reviewed in NSW and VIC, there was no evidence of negative impacts on property values. Furthermore, the resale values of all the properties examined in the report experienced capital growth in line with the property market trends. A full copy of the report is available here.

In another study completed in 2013, national property consultants Preston Rowe Paterson conducted an assessment of the impact of wind farms on surrounding land values in Australia, and similarly concluded that there was no 'quantifiable effect on land values'. The full report can be found here.

It is important to note many factors influence land and property prices. Supply and demand, proximity to amenities and infrastructure, housing affordability and the desirability of the location can all have an impact.

What sort of workers or suppliers will be needed and how can I register my business?

We expect a number of skills and suppliers to be required by our main contractor during the construction phase of the project which include:

Skills

- Earthworks plant operator
- Labourers
- Mechanical and electrical engineers/fitters
- Cementers and grouters
- Building contractors
- Heavy vehicle truck drivers
- Heavy machinery operators
- Pipelayers
- Welding and engineering

Suppliers

- Mechanics and maintenance
- Cleaners
- Accommodation
- Catering services
- Equipment hire
- Fencers
- Freight
- Waste management
- Administration

If you're interested in finding out more about future employment opportunities, please register your interest on our website.

What benefits will there be for local businesses?

During the construction phase of the project, it is envisaged that a number of local businesses will experience an increase in sales as the onsite workforce purchase everyday items such as food, drinks, petrol and other groceries. There will also be a demand for increased accommodation in the area. This will include long term accommodation requirements, particularly during the two-year construction period.

Once the transition to operation occurs, the onsite workforce of up to 35 people may provide a modest boost to ongoing sales of these grocery items.

Local community benefits can include:

- Boost to the local and regional economy and local businesses
- Jobs during construction and operation
- Training, skills development and education programs
- Community Enhancement Fund

How was the business survey conducted and what were the key results?

ENGIE undertook a survey in August 2021 to gauge project sentiment amongst business owners who will have a direct impact from traffic movements associated with the project. The survey was sent to known businesses with a shopfront or that are home-based in both Nundle and Hanging Rock. The survey was also used to gain feedback on a number of proposed traffic management strategies.

A total of 55 responses were received showing that 67% of local business owners with a shopfront are in favour of the Project. Of those that support the project, more than 90 per cent believe the Project will bring economic benefits to their business, with majority citing increased revenue and increased customers as the biggest benefits.

In addition, 75 per cent of the supportive business owners believe ENGIE's project will strengthen the region's existing tourism market.

Will Nundle tourism be impacted by the project?

The Nundle region is already a popular tourist destination, reliant on the area's rich gold mining history and natural beauty. Our aim is to ensure that the HOGWF can co-exist with and complement the existing heritage and natural elements of the Nundle region.

As part of further investigations into the proposed development's impact on tourism, the University of Newcastle was engaged to compile a report on wind energy and tourism.

The desktop study looked into the benefits and opportunities of wind farm tourism, concluding that '*there is very little academic evidence that the presence of wind farms has a significant negative economic impact on the tourism industry in rural localities*' (Dr Barrie Shannon, 2021).

It also stated that '*adventure tourism, eco-tourism and educational tourism incorporating wind farm infrastructure are emerging globally as key opportunities for rural localities'* (Dr Barrie Shannon, 2021). You can ready the report in full on our website.

We believe the HOGWF will boost local tourism and bring additional visitors to the area by appealing to different markets. There are several examples of wind farm tourism in Australia and around the world, with many wind farms listed as tourist destinations in their own right.

There are many benefits to businesses located near windfarms, including using turbines in advertising and imagery. There are also several wind farms that host bus tours for visitors and school groups, which is something that will be considered for the HOGWF.