Dear XXX

I wish to register my concerns and seek your support to oppose Fera Australia Pty Ltd’s proposed development of a wind energy facility and high voltage transmission line in the Southern Strathbogie Ranges.

While I support the transition to renewable energy, I firmly believe that the size and scale of this project is completely inappropriate for this location and that the forecast benefits are far outweighed by the significant environmental impacts on several state and nationally listed endangered flora and fauna, and to the unique geology and hydrology of this significant landscape.

I outline my concerns and objections to this proposed project below and hope that they provide information to assist you to support your community and constituency to influence planning authorities to block this development.

**Scale and location:**

Described as one of the largest proposed windfarms in Victoria, there has been no precedent for a development of this scale in this type of landscape. While information is hard to obtain from the proponent (Fera), to date it is proposed to consist of around 100 wind turbines each with a total height of 236m (100-150m hub height plus 86m blade length). For context, these are some 50% higher than the nearby Cherry Tree turbines (159m) and almost three times higher than the light towers at the MCG. They will become the dominant feature of the landscape over hundreds of thousands of hectares of the Southern Strathbogie ranges. In addition, Fera will need to build a high voltage transmission line and a substation to connect the wind turbines to the main 330kV Victoria – NSW Interconnect. This will require a 60m clear felled easement of up to 30km long.

The proposal area is outside of the State Government’s Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) and I strongly believe that this project is not suited to this location and landscape. The proposed scale and extent of the windfarm covers thousands of hectares, intersecting major ridgelines, the Hughes Creek catchment, Goulburn River and the foothills of the Great Dividing Range.

**Landscape Character:** The western border of the proposal area has been identified as regionally significant in the recent draft [Mitchell Shire Council's Significant Landscape character assessment](https://engagingmitchellshire.com/landscapes) (and other earlier LGA landscape character assessment reports, for example, see [Murrindindi Shire Council](https://www.murrindindi.vic.gov.au/Your-Property/Planning-and-Building/Planning-and-Development/Planning-Information/Other-planning-forms-and-documents)). The proposed development in this section of the Strathbogie Ranges traverses three LGAs: Mitchell, Strathbogie and Murrindindi but there is no consistent process for Significant Landscape Character Assessments across the three LGAs. This is urgently needed so that the entire, contiguous landscape of the Southern Strathbogies has a consistent significant landscape character assessment incorporated into planning schemes which will ensure that its values are protected from inappropriate development, particularly on the unique granite boulder strewn ridgelines and long view lines. To achieve this, Strathbogie Council needs to urgently commence a landscape assessment (similar to Mitchell’s) and incorporate significant landscapes into its planning scheme. Murrindindi Council should update its existing landscape character assessment and incorporate it into its planning scheme and Mitchell Council should adopt their Significant Landscape Character Assessment and incorporate it into its planning scheme.

**Biodiversity:** A development of this size and distribution is likely to impact important habitat connectivity and further increase habitat fragmentation through loss of native vegetation by the construction of 100 - 150kms of new roads and widening existing roads. The area supports a range of State and Federally protected flora and fauna. Many areas on private property are unsurveyed or contain historic records that need verifying. I am contributing to our local evidence base by capturing data on [*iNaturalist*](https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/strathbogie-ranges-nature-atlas-project) for inclusion in the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas. I hope that further detailed, independent research and monitoring will be undertaken to determine the range of species likely to be affected by this project.

My local community knows that this environment supports a range of listed species from Macquarie Perch to the Greater Glider that must be adequately protected from large, industrial scale developments such as this windfarm. There is collision risk by raptors and migratory species including Gang Gang cockatoos, Swift Parrots and microbats, and loss of old growth canopy habitat for arboreal marsupials such as Tuans, Koalas and Greater Gliders.

The GBCMA Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) highlights roadsides of high biodiversity value that I understand could be impacted by the developer to access rocky, hilly elevated areas for transporting materials and equipment, including 80 - 90m long turbine blades.  Construction works on narrow, winding roads will impact roadside vegetation that includes large old, scattered trees and ground storey vegetation functioning as important connectivity between agricultural land and blocks of native vegetation.

The current proposed area (as of May 2023) for the 15 - 30km long x 60m wide HVTL interconnector and substation easement runs through areas of Herb Rich Foot Hill forests and woodlands, extending from the escarpment in the Switzerland Range to the Black Range near Molesworth. This includes State Forest.

**Geology:** The landscape is of international [geological significance.](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/08120099.2022.2032340) I am concerned that there are unknown and under-researched impacts to groundwater and dependent ecosystems.  The region has very complex [hydrogeology](https://www.strathbogieranges.org.au/strathbogie-groundwater-project-2/) which could potentially be impacted by construction of more than 100 kilometres of proposed new roadways and 100ha+ hardstand for up to 100 turbines.

**Social Licence:** Since 2019 there has been very poor consultation by Fera with the communities and individual (approximately 400) landholders in the project area. There is a lack of transparency and respect in terms of engagement with neighbouring landholders who are going to be impacted by the windfarm and HVTL project. It is only in 2023 that Fera have publicly informed the community of their proposal, after they have already secured agreements with around 10 turbine host properties. We have received inconsistent information, too late, from the proponent that has created confusion, division and distress among many hundreds of people. There is gross social /economic inequity because of the financial incentives/reimbursements for turbine hosts compared to what the rest of the community will potentially be provided to compensate for a range of likely negative impacts.

I would be very supportive of a much more equitable, community driven approach to renewable energy projects better suited to this region and which directly benefit this community.

Optional additional:

You may wish to also talk about your concerns about impacts on property values, and to your way of life if you are neighbouring turbines and or transmission lines – eg noise, flicker, glare, views etc

I look forward to hearing how you will support your constituents to protect their environment and way of life from this completely inappropriate development.

Kind regards,

Xx