

Apple's Tim Cook expels Andrew Forrest's hot air

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Andrew Forrest's [Squadron Energy acquired 75 per cent of wind farm developer Windlab](#) in June 2020, making Australia's richest man the developer of a \$1 billion wind project at Upper Burdekin in North Queensland.

In a major coup last August, [Windlab signed an offtake agreement with Apple](#) under which the global technology giant would purchase 500 of the 600 megawatts Upper Burdekin will generate annually for 15 years from 2026. This was a real contract worth around \$450 million, not one of those bullshit memoranda Twiggy signs with dazed South American governors to sell them green hydrogen extracted from the steam of his own piss.



Apple has withdrawn from an offtake agreement for renewable energy with Andrew Forrest's Windlab. **AP**

No lesser being than **Tim Cook** was moved to say, "We're proud to celebrate Apple's long history in Australia, and to deepen our shared

commitment to protecting the planet and creating opportunity in people's lives.”

For Forrest, this was the stuff PR dreams are made of. This was image adjacency – imagineering – that money cannot buy.

It suggested that Forrest's green energy offering had survived the rigorous due diligence processes of the world's largest company.

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It implied that if Andrew Forrest's wind was good enough for Apple, it must be really good.

It told us that Forrest had added the world's most exalted boss of the world's most exalted company [to his set of McHappy Meal power figurines](#). Forrest alone had the rolled gold Rolodex, the direct line to Tim Cook (and probably even to **Steve Jobs** in heaven) to get a deal like this done.

[Like the hereditary President of Gabon](#), was Cook moved by Twiggy's doctorate in ecology? Or was Cook defeated by a fatigue negotiator, pursued relentlessly through every pavilion in Davos?

In January, Windlab's own draft Public Environment Report contained some indigestible truths about the potential ecological effects of the Upper Burdekin project, including its “unavoidable significant residual impact to Sharman's rockwallaby, koala, greater glider and red goshawk...”

The red goshawk is Australia's rarest bird of prey. The koala was also listed as an endangered species in February 2022.

This, and the deep concern of a bevy of conservationists, was [picked up by The Guardian last month](#).

The draft report also found that the 746 hectares of koala habitat being removed for the wind farm “is considered habitat critical to the survival of the species.”

Well, it turns out that was more than enough potential roadkill for Cupertino. A spokesman for the company told us on Tuesday that “Apple is no longer participating in the Upper Burdekin project. Apple will continue to explore renewable energy projects in Australia.”

It’s a grand irony, really. This is a project that would produce enough renewable energy to power 300,000 homes and remove 1.2 million tonnes of carbon from the National Electricity Market annually. In addition, the rockwallaby hides can be repurposed for RM Williams and the ground beaks of the red goshawks will make tremendous wellness powders for BWX.

Windlab may have lost its flagship customer and the associated brand halo but there should ultimately be no shortage of demand for its energy. The real question is whether Forrest’s companies are prepared to battle on through the reputational damage this project will wreak in its current form.

There is, of course, no such thing as a wind farm that will not eliminate birds and after two years of environmental studies and consultation, Windlab has sought to mitigate the impact on wildlife. The project design preserves 98 per cent of native vegetation.

Nevertheless, they propose to log 750 hectares of koala habitat. Koalas will die. What is Andrew Forrest, whose ecological bona fides melts the hearts of world leaders, going to do about that?