

IN QUEENSLAND

Core values: Apple walks away from Twiggy's huge Queensland wind farm

BUSINESS

Technology giant Apple has walked away from the Upper Burdekin windfarm in central Queensland.



[John McCarthy](#)

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Apple has walked away from Andrew Forrest's Upper Burdekin project (AAP photo)

Windlab, in which Andrew Forrest's Squadron Energy has a majority stake, confirmed Apple was no longer a part of the wind farm project which has attracted activist attention because of a potential impact on wildlife.

Apple had entered the project in a wave of publicity by signing up to be an offtake partner in a strategy to offset customer energy use.

But *InQueensland* revealed in February that the project was significantly scaled back last year with 56 turbines dropped from its plan in an attempt to avoid environmental impacts. It would still retain about 80 turbines.

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Windlab said it and Apple had agreed to terminate a Power Purchase Agreement for the Upper Burdekin Wind Farm.

"The development phase of the project has taken significantly longer than originally anticipated, and the project no longer meets the PPA's milestone requirements," the company said.

"Any suggestion that we will not apply the highest of standards to protect koalas and other species is incorrect.

"Following more than two years' in-depth environmental studies and consultation, we have delivered a project design that preserves more than 98 per cent of native vegetation on the cattle property where the project is located.

"We will deliver robust management plans to ensure the welfare of native species.

"This includes the project being a tier one monitoring site for the CSIRO's National Koala Monitoring Program, appointment of expert ecologists to supervise project activity, implementing appropriate exclusion zones, relocating wildlife if required, creating buffer zones around identified habitat and reducing weeds and predatory pests."

One of the protest organisers and a member of Rainforest Reserves Australia Steven Nowakowski said it was a small victory among a tsunami of projects that were not being assessed properly.

"The decision by Apple will send a strong message to other renewable investors that there are good and bad renewable projects," he said.

"We applaud Apple on its decision. It is the right decision.

“To be associated with the bulldozing of critical habitat for so many endangered species was never going to sit well with Apple consumers and for that matter anyone who cares for our wildlife.”

Windlab had previously published an environmental report on the project said that for the local koala population and the red goshawk there was a potential significant residual impact.

The project was also next to the Girringun National Park and 5km from the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

Significant areas of vegetation would also be impacted and would lead to the removal of 662ha of habitat for the rock wallaby and 746ha of habitat for koalas, but the environmental report said important populations of four impacted species would continue to be present in the area.

“At the broadest scale, significant impact avoidance has been achieved through project design changes, with 56 wind turbines being removed by the southern portion of the project area,” the report said.

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AAP also reported this morning that Andrew Forrest had been given the green light by Western Australia’s environmental watchdog to proceed with developing an eco-resort along the Ningaloo coast.

Forrest’s private investment group Tattarang has proposed to redevelop an existing caravan park north of Exmouth at Padjari Manu, or Vlamingh Head with accommodation that included eco-tents, hotel rooms, villas and caravan park sites for about 550 guests.

Tattarang has been working towards approval for the project on the world heritage-listed Ningaloo coast for more than two years.

WA’s Environmental Protection Authority on Tuesday recommended Environment Minister Reece Whitby approve the project subject to conditions including measures to mitigate impacts on turtle nesting.