

**Submission
No 39**

INQUIRY INTO RURAL WIND FARMS

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Submission to NSW Legislative Council Rural Wind Farms Inquiry

I live outside Nimmitabel in SE NSW. A 127-wind-turbine development (known as the Boco Wind Farm) is proposed for 150 sq. km. of privately-owned, open grazing country SW of the township. I am not directly affected by the development but it will be scattered across a massive swathe of the Great Dividing Range in full view of the Australian Alps so it will have a far-reaching impact on some of the most exposed and majestic landscape in the state.

My concern is that because of the recent imperative to commence renewable energy projects, the extraordinary beauty of this place and others like it (eg. Lake George) will be overlooked for what is perceived as the greater good.

I think we should pause and ask why these particularly scenic sites are being targeted by developers and then diligently scrutinise their inflated claims of power generation capacity and efficiency. My belief is that the main reason these sites are suitable for turbine projects is not because of some rare and exceptional "wind-resource" or proximity [sic] to the Grid as claimed in the case of the Nimmitabel site but because developers have identified pockets of landholders (one only in the Lake George case) willing to lease their high country for turbines.

Furthermore, just because wind energy is classified as "renewable" doesn't mean the landscape is. The scale of the construction outlined in the Boco Preliminary Environmental Assessment dated 15 May 2009 makes it clear that this site will never be the same again. Turbine developers always claim that at the end of the 20-year lease (a renewable lease it should be stressed) the turbines can be removed and the landscape restored. What about the impact on the landscape for those 20-plus years? The PEA in this case even admits (in item 9.9 De-Commissioning) that despite an undertaking that "the land will be returned to prior condition and use.....the individual landowners will be involved in any discussion regarding the removal or handover [my emphasis] of infra-structure on their property".

I believe these developments will almost certainly be a permanent feature of some of our finest landscape and that the terrain will be severely degraded. The proposals should therefore meet even greater scrutiny than that required for other industrial development. And, if they can't be located in discreet, semi-industrial areas on the periphery of urban sprawl then they do not deserve to be labelled "renewable" any more than coal from a mine.

Alan Moorehead, the late and highly-esteemed Australian writer, in his book *Coopers Creek* (1963), an account of the Burke and Wills expedition, imagines their reaction to the landscape: "nothing in this strange country seemed to bear the slightest resemblance to the outside world world. It was so primitive, so lacking in greenness, so silent, so old." And nothing epitomises this eulogy to our landscape better than the vast but dwindling tracts of the Monaro. Plant wind-turbines on it and it becomes just another copy of the Danish and German coastlines.

The very qualities Moorehead identifies so elegantly are the ones that make it a 'sitting duck' for wind turbine developers- that and the willingness of cash-strapped landowners and governments acutely aware of their 'green' credentials.

You have the final say and I think we will all be grateful in the long-term if you display sensitivity, courage and circumspection before giving the 'green-light' to these destructive schemes. You may or may not achieve your renewable energy targets but one thing is certain the effort will be at great cost to some very precious landscapes.

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