

**Submission
No 74**

INQUIRY INTO RURAL WIND FARMS

Organisation: Glen Innes Landscape Guardians (GILG)
Name: Ms Suzanne McAlary
Date received: 21/08/2009

21 August 2009

Mr Ian Cohen
Committee Chairman
NSW Inquiry Rural Wind Farms
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY. NSW. 2000.

Dear Mr Cohen and committee members,

Re: Inquiry into rural wind farms in NSW

Please find enclosed our submission in relation to the above inquiry.

This submission represents residents of the Furracabad Valley, west of Glen Innes on the New England Tablelands.

Please find attached a list detailing the names and addresses of the Glen Innes Landscape Guardians' members.

Please note that some members of the GILG will be submitting personal submissions to the inquiry.

This submission is written from the dealings we have experienced over the past 18 months with the proponents of the proposed Glen Innes Wind Farm and the NSW DoP.

We are supportive of sustainable energy solutions and supportive of the State and Federal Governments' initiative to produce a portion of the country's electricity needs from renewable sources by 2020.

We do not oppose wind farms. However the location of very large wind turbines (130 metres tall) in close proximity to rural/residential homes and Government buildings should not be allowed.

We believe a minimum 2km setback of turbines from rural homes is a must.

It is our hope that this inquiry will result in the establishment of a strong set of guidelines for wind farm developers, and provide protection for rural communities.

Yours sincerely,

SUZANNE MCALARY

Enc: GILG membership list/ Appendices

Cc: Richard Torbay, Tony Windsor, Glen Innes Severn Council

Glen Innes Landscape Guardians submission to the Legislative Council

Inquiry into rural wind farms

Glen Innes Landscape Guardians was established in early 2008 to work towards protecting residents from close proximity wind turbines at the southern end of the proposed Glen Innes Wind Farm

The Glen Innes Wind Farm proposal is for 27, 130 metre high, turbines on the Waterloo Range some 12km west of Glen Innes extending south onto the foothills of the Furracabad Valley.

The GILG campaign grew out of local concern regarding the proximity of the southern turbines to residences in the Furracabad Valley from a consensus of Furracabad residents who wanted the turbines removed and/or relocated.

The GILG has sought to have the proposed Glen Innes Wind Farm modified rather than stopped. We are not against sustainable energy solutions just the proximity of some turbines to nearby homes.

We have worked to have turbines situated a minimum of 2km from residences because at this distance many of the ill effects are significantly reduced. The 2km setback has been a compromise position agreed upon despite many residents calling for greater setbacks.

The 2km setback has evolved from overseas and Australian experience which confirms the diminution of effects particularly at that distance.

This setback has been endorsed by some turbine manufacturers as well as medical experts who have researched the health effects of close proximity turbines, like Dr Nina Pierpont in the USA. (See appendix 1)

The GILG campaign has involved lobbying the Glen Severn Council to produce a Development Control Plan indicating the Council's attitude to wind farms and this DCP (See appendix 2) recommends a minimum 2km setback, greater if the turbines are situated higher than any nearby residences.

The 2km setback is supported by the GILG, Furracabad Valley residents, the greater Glen Innes community, Glen Severn Council as well as our local

member and speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the NSW Parliament, the Honourable Richard Torbay.

Mr Torbay was quoted in the Glen Innes Examiner 5/6/08 "Council has made the right decision and there is no doubt that the turbines would be too close to existing homes under the current plan. It is a significant industrial development and should be modified to ensure it harmonizes with the existing landscape and its residents rather than totally dominating them.

"While no one is arguing against the concept of the wind farm the local community should have its say on reducing the impact of their environment."

Our opposition to the proposed Wind Farm in its current configuration was supported by nearly 600 petitioners to State Parliament.

Our overtures to the proponent to offer our assistance in reconfiguring the wind farm have not been responded to.

This lack of response has been consistent with the appalling quality of the proponent's consultants' community consultation.

The proponent failed to consult the affected community until their plans were well advanced and this consultation has been generally atrocious.

The Director- General's requirements state that "the proponent must undertake an appropriate and justified level of consultation with.....the local community" and that "the Environmental Assessment must clearly describe the consultation process and indicate the issues raised by stakeholders during consultation and how these matters have been addressed".

These requirements were not adequately addressed.

AUSWIND the Australian Association of Wind Farm proponents have developed Best Practice Guidelines which stress the importance of community engagement and consultation but "best practice" was certainly not achieved in the proponent's dealing with its proposed wind farm neighbours.

The recent Gullen Wind Farm determination also suggests that the community consultation of that wind farm proposal was also lacking.

“Overall, the Department considers that community consultation with immediate non-involved landholders was shown to be lacking for this project.” Director General Report – NSW DoP Gullen Range Determination June 09.

And so this appears to be an endemic problem.

So no wonder rural communities feel disenfranchised and bullied by wind farm proponents and the NSW Department of Planning.

Rural communities have to endure poorer services and health outcomes, isolation, educational inequality and now have to put up with the nations wind turbines on their doorsteps.

All of this without any setback guidelines to protect them from the noise, visual, health and adverse property value effects.

This is outrageous and will only lead to a further exodus of skilled talent from “the bush”.

We need guidelines for minimum setbacks for wind turbines from non wind farmer residences.

A 2km setback is supported by leaders in the field of research into the health effects of proximity to wind turbines such as Dr Nina Pierpont (see appendix 1) and Dr Amanda Harry (see appendix 3) and there is now an international petition for a 2km minimum setback.

Premier Rees was quoted in the Glen Innes Examiner of 17/3/09 (see appendix 4) stating that “wind farm developments should comply with local council and community standards” and that “fast tracking will not undermine community or council requirements” and we hope that this will be the case.

With regard to the Inquiry’s terms of reference 1 we do not believe that wind farms can significantly displace fossil fuel power generation because of the variability of wind as a resource (see appendix 5).

We believe that other forms of sustainable energy solutions such as solar, solar thermal, geothermal and tidal power as well as the promotion of energy

efficiency can make the changes to bring about real reductions in green house gas emissions.

We again refer to the Gullen Range Wind Farm determination where it is stated, "The project thus represents a good example of a renewable energy initiative with certain greenhouse gas saving benefits."

Obviously, the DoP are bias towards wind farm developments and are not prepared to acknowledge the inefficiency of wind farm energy.

We refer to the Inquiry's terms of reference 3 – the impact of rural wind farms on property values.

We note that in the UK last year, in a land mark case, a court ruled that living near a wind farm decreases house prices. The plaintiff, Jane Davis, was told that she would get a discount on her council tax because her home had been rendered worthless by a turbine 930 metres away.

On a local level, many Glen Innes real estate agents are concerned about the impact that the proposed Glen Innes Wind Farm, and a number of other proposed wind farms in the district, will have on property values and sales.

World- wide there is extensive evidence of reduced property values.

And if one was in doubt about the reduction in neighbouring property values, just ask yourself, if you had a choice of purchasing a property, with, or without, a near neighbouring wind farm, which would you prefer?

The proposed turbines are 130metre tall (as tall as a 40 storey building) and an industrial element introduced into a rural landscape.

Because they are in elevated positions on ridges they dominate any nearby houses and this domination is confirmed by blade rotation, noise and visual effects including night lighting.

The proponent and the DoP are dismissive of complaints regarding visual impact, believing that rural home owners must put up with these ill-effects (as well as adverse health effects) for the good of the nation.

This is despite the fact that wind power has been revealed to be a costly, unreliable and inefficient furbphy that is incapable of closing down any fossil fuel generated power station in Australia.

We support all other sustainable energy solutions.

If NSW persists in the divisive roll out of wind power it must protect close wind farm neighbours by adequate setbacks – a minimum of 2km.

We value and love our sunburnt country and refer you to Dorothea MacKellar's poem "My Country" (appendix 6).

In conclusion we reiterate Premier Rees' statement earlier this year "wind farm developments should comply with local council and community standards".

Rural communities want and deserve a minimum 2km setback of turbines from nearby homes.

Yours sincerely,

SUZANNE MCALARY