

**Submission
No 77**

INQUIRY INTO RURAL WIND FARMS

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Submission to Rural Wind Farms (Inquiry)

As a resident of rural NSW, living on the Monaro, where the Boco Rock wind farm, one of the largest developments in Australia is planned, I can speak from personal experience regarding the effect of proposed wind farms on a rural community.

Landscape assessment is subjective, but the landscape on the Monaro has changed very little since before white settlement. It is a grazing area and has not been cleared, being in many parts a natural treeless plain. It is of immense beauty, extensive views visible from every hill where a 360 degree view shows very little sign of mans presence. In a rapidly developing world, untouched areas like this are more and more rare. As I write, there is a Toyota 4 wheel drive advertisement being filmed in this area, which is chosen time and again for its landscape qualities, Jindabyne and Somersault movies for example were shot on the Monaro.

The wind company tells us on their website that they can mitigate against the visual impact of the turbines - 150 gigantic towers, that are 150 meters tall, with rotating blades and covering an area of 150 square kilometres set on ridges. They tell us they will blend in with the landscape. How insulting!

If you look at the experience from Europe, particularly Germany which has 17,000 wind turbines installed, more than any other country in Europe, wind power generation has not enabled a single fossil-fuelled power station to close. Due to the inconsistency of wind, there is need for 90%+ backup by fossil-fuels. According to a recent article on July 19th in The Times newspaper, the German wind turbines have not resulted in a single gram of CO2 being abated. The article urges that other countries learn from the experience of Europe.

Rural communities rely on good communications and trust to run their communities and organisations such as the fire brigade, sports clubs, and charity groups. The process to sign up land holders that the wind companies undertake undermines the trust and friendships between neighbours and is replaced by suspicion and bad feeling. It is well documented that the secrecy and silence agreement signed by the lease holders with the company only adds to this mistrust. In addition, when lease holders receive up to \$10,000 per turbine per year while their neighbour experiences a loss in property value, plus the loss of amenity and often noise issues as well, it is not surprising there is bad feeling.

In our own experience, our neighbours who are also cousins of my husbands who were signed up with a wind company, and who have been friends of my parents in law for over 60 years, are no longer friends. Ironically, this particular proposal is not going ahead but the relationship is in tatters. Neighbours of some other friends adjoining the wind farm proposal no longer speak due to the prospect of proposed turbines affecting them. In a small rural community this is devastating.

There is ample evidence that land values of properties adjoining a wind farm or within sight of a wind farm experience a loss in value of at least 25 -35%. Chris Meares of Meares and Associates Real Estate, the leading lifestyle rural property agent in NSW, has commented that there is no doubt that a property within sight of a wind farm will suffer a decrease in value. I have interviewed real estate agents and property valuers in NSW and in Gippsland in Victoria who have experienced this as well. Interviews with a councillor, property valuer, real estate agent and affected community members are recorded on a DVD called "Wind Turbines.....Worth the Cost?" and I have sent it to the inquiry by post.

I have read that in some countries the owners of properties adjoining windfarms and their neighbours are compensated for the loss of amenity. This at least is slightly more equitable. Those immediately adjoining are paid 50% of the lease payment, those not so close 25% and so on. I would recommend this as a means to alleviate community dissention.

The claims made by wind companies when applying for a development application are misleading. The Boco Rock wind farm developer claims that the wind farm will generate power for 8760 hours per year. This claim means that the turbines will generate for 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. This is just not possible and the information from the wind monitors would show this. Living in this area for over 20 years the autumn months are almost entirely without wind.

In the media, the articles that one reads are invariably anti-wind, questioning the benefits of wind powered energy generation. I am yet to see an article that sings the praises of turbines that is not written by people with vested interests.

It is frustrating to hear the claims made by wind companies and politicians and feel so powerless as a tiny voice. We need to have representation by people who are committed to make a real difference to climate change and not just tokenism for political gain.

I can't help but feel very cynical, that with the determination of the federal and state governments to install wind turbines on most of the high ridges in NSW that this inquiry is merely an exercise in "community consultation" so that the government can tick this box and then continue to build wind turbines in some of the most magnificent areas of NSW and for no real gain in reducing greenhouse gases.