

Submission
No 8

INQUIRY INTO RURAL WIND FARMS

Name: Mr Peter Smith

Date received: 3/08/2009

02-08-2009

The Director,
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5.

Dear Sirs,

I would like to take the opportunity to request the committee to seriously consider the impact of wind farms on the human population.

I will first of all admit to a recent interest in the impact of wind turbines as a result of the likelihood of a 178 turbine farm being constructed in this district and I suppose I could be accused of being in the NIMBY brigade. However I believe that there are some serious implications for communities that are reigned over by these gigantic structures.

It is not reasonable that an individual or company should be allowed by authorities to impact on their neighbour's lifestyle, health or financial security for their own financial gain without be required to either buy them out or in some way be required to pay reasonable compensation. Wind turbines are not so important to the well being of society that they can be placed in the most convenient location for the proponents without any regard for the concerns of the population that reside in the immediate vicinity. Wind turbines, whilst they generate large amounts of electricity when the wind blows, cannot by their nature generate constant voltage and as such must have coal fired power stations running constantly in the system to avoid fluctuations in voltage and destroying electrical hardware. This of course degrades their value as generators of sustainable energy and in the reduction of greenhouse gases.

Noise measurements are fudged by the proponents, as they set up testing equipment behind sound absorbing structures and windbreaks, and cannot replicate exactly the noise from a mass of turbines beating in unison. Any one who has visited a wind farm knows that immediately under a turbine is generally quite but in different circumstances you cannot hear yourself think 2 kilometres away. The effect of shadow flicker and glint on people with pre existing medical conditions such as autism and migraine can be devastating.

There is also emerging considerable anecdotal evidence from the South Gippsland region in Victoria that there has been a significant drop in values of lifestyle properties because of the reluctance of people to purchase homes where they have their lifestyle impacted by wind turbines. It is acknowledged that council rates have fallen as a direct result of falling property values. It is obvious that a significant number of the population who are looking for a quieter life in the country, with the rural ambiance that entails, would not consider buying property in a forest of wind turbines and that will automatically suppress prices.

There must surely be legislation or regulations put in place to ensure there is an equitable resolution to disputes between the proponents of these farms and the residents who may be adversely affected by their installation. There is ample protection of fauna and flora these days, but there is nowhere near the same concern shown for the human species, as an example towers must be painted white so birds won't be flying into them, therefore highlighting their appalling visual effect along the ridgelines. I am happy to have the birds protected but why are they allowed to be placed where they impact people.

Another concern is the potential for conflict between residents some of whom are desperate for the big payday regardless of the effect it has on their neighbours and the others who are enraged that people that they thought were friends would allow their greed to destroy the ambiance of a community. Australia is a big country with a lot of wind and surely they can be located in a manner in which there is a win win for everyone.

A windfarm is undeniably an industrial complex and as such, should not be allowed in a rural residential area. I believe that a 5Km. exclusion zone from a residential dwelling is not unreasonable. At that distance there would be no noise or shadow flicker problems and the visual pollution would be so insignificant that it should not affect property values. I would however allow towers to be placed inside that exclusion zone if a compensation or buyout package acceptable to the affected owner or owners was negotiated, this would be an insignificant burden on the windfarm proponents in terms of the total cost of the project.

I hope this committee will give serious consideration to my suggestions and recommend to the Government to regulate this booming industry before it gets out of hand.

Yours Sincerely,



Peter Smith.