

**Submission
No 69**

INQUIRY INTO RURAL WIND FARMS

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The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Re: Submission to The Inquiry into Rural Wind Farms

Wind farms are not clean and green. they are pollution both visually and environmentally. We wish to state some facts arising from our own experience over the past five years, of a proposed wind farm development.

It is time that independant research is undertaken to determine if wind farms do actually assist in reducing greenhouse gases.

Whatever wind farm developers say is accepted as fact. No one questions their claims that wind farms are carbon neutral. What amount of greenhouse gases are emitted during manufacture, foundations, steel reinforceing etc., maintenance, demolition at end of their life and conversion to scrap. And there is no mention of the electricity required to start up the turbines. They also do claim, without evidence, that windfarms will power x amount of houses, however, they fail to mention what happens when there is no wind. When there is no wind there is no electricity and windfarms only operate for less than 1/3 of the time that they are standing, so conventional generation is still required as backup.

Wind farms need a large area and many turbines to be viable. Not good for the environment. An approved wind farm in our area will consist of 61 turbines (each over 130m tall), cover an area of 11 km x 5 km (55 sq km) and will be sited only 3 kms from the village of Taralga. NSW needs more than 12,000 Mw. Taralga wind farm capacity is 120 Mw but as stated by the developer, can realistically only operate at 30% or less than 40 Mw which is very little output for such a large area of operation. How much of the landscape will be damaged by the construction of wind farms. Thousands of turbines would need to be installed for any significant amount of power to be generated, destroying huge areas of our landscape.

If a wind farm must be built then siting is critical. Build them where they will not disturb anyone. Wind can not be guaranteed in any area.

The negative impacts on the community far outweigh any positives that the wind farm may produce. Some jobs during construction but then what?

There has been little consultation with the people of Taralga and what seems as a complete disregard for the community's views. The wind farm is not yet built but the community is divided over the issue. It seems to be common practice by wind farm developers (the world over) to secretly approach and do deals with farmers to host turbines on their properties. These farmers are encouraged to keep all dealings secret. If wind farms are so good, safe, clean and environmentally friendly, why all the secrecy? Why the reliance on subsidies to build and operate wind farms? This Wind Farm was originally approved by the Planning Minister, basically, after a 5 minute visit to a pub in Taralga. This shows little respect for the local community.

The village of Taralga and neighbouring properties will be subjected to loss of amenity with 130m tall moving turbines towering over the village, noise, shadow flicker, property values and continued community division as is happening at other wind farm sites such as Toora, Vic.

At least one Taralga resident will not be able to continue to muster on horseback because the turbines will be right on her boundary and it is known that the moving blades and noise of wind farms scare the horses. She cannot use motor bikes due to the steepness of the terrain. This will make it difficult to run her business. Many people ride in rural areas and soon will not be able to ride safely because of the turbines.

Property values have dropped where wind farms are built as shown in Toora, Victoria. The Council recognised this fact and reduced the rates as land values have decreased. There are residents who have had to move out of their homes and cannot sell them. We have noticed since the building of the Capital Windfarm near Bungendore there seems to have been a large increase in properties for sale in that area and, considering how close to Canberra this is, prices seem rather cheap. It has happened here in Taralga and the wind farm is not yet built. Friends recently sold their house and had to accept a lower price as wind farms were mentioned in the negotiating.

The idea of renewable energy is to help save the planet and protect the environment. Wind farms are weapons of mass destruction for birds and bats. There is ample evidence to support this. This is also supported by the fact that no dams are to be build near turbines, existing dams are to be filled in and no feeding of livestock near turbines so birds are not attracted to the area and chopped up by blades. Tasmanian

wedge tail eagles are being slaughtered by Woolnorth Wind Farm (Transcript from Tasmania Stateline 21.9.07). And this is happening at wind farms throughout the world. The L&E court, the Greens, National Parks and RSPCA have conveniently ignored this fact. Bird kills by the proposed wind farm in our area has been acknowledged by the Land & Environment Court as part of their consent. The developer would be required to make a financial contribution of \$1500 per eagle killed that has been reasonably been attributed to the carrying out of the development. This payment is to go to WIRES, indexed with the CPI (condition No. 92 of Conditions of Consent of Taralga wind farm, NSW Land & Environment Court), yet if an individual kills an eagle, the fine is more than \$5,000, what is the difference?

The Taralga wind farm developer and state government departments have shown little or no interest in environmental issues and have ignored the many state and federally endangered flora and fauna species that are proven to be in the proposed site, including the brush tail rock wallaby, diamond firetail, Tablelands Basalt Forest, Natural Temperate Grasslands to name a few. Disturbance of the soils on hilltops (where turbines need to be sited) cause instability of the soils and sediment movement. But no one in authority seems to care.

Wind farms are far from environmentally friendly, and their developers even less so. Interested only in the money, the wind farms are built at the cost of the environment. Shortcuts are taken and environmental issues are overlooked as wind farms seem a good idea to politicians who are seen to be doing something without actually knowing anything about what they are sanctioning, while wind farm developers make money with little or no regard for the affected communities and environment.

We are strongly in favour of alternative energy that does not negatively impact on the local communities and the environment in the way that wind farms do. We suggest that money spent on wind farm development would be better spent on research into other viable renewable energy.

DR JAMES LOVELOCK: At the best, wind power cannot provide more than a tiny fraction of the energy needs of civilisation. I think it's one of those things politicians like because it can be seen that they're doing something. (Dr James Lovelock, 60 Minutes, Channel 9, 17.8.08)

Yours faithfully,

Peter Sherwin &
Rosemary Noakes Sherwin
20 August 2009