

**Submission
No 64**

INQUIRY INTO RURAL WIND FARMS

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Thank you for the opportunity to lodge a submission to the Legislative Council General Purpose Standing Committee No 5 Inquiry into Wind Farms.

The preliminary assessment required of Ecological and Environmental Impact Assessment completed as a requirement for the Department of Planning and submitted for discussion at a meeting at Ben Lomond on 29th January 2008, for discussion, highlighted the need for further investigations as well as provision for mitigation strategies to compensate for the impact of any wind farm developments in rural communities.

I would therefore request that further investigation be undertaken in consideration of the impact of wind farms, prior to their further large scale construction throughout rural Australia.

-Carbon Neutral Timeframe.

The timeframe to achieve carbon neutral status, claimed between competitors in the district must be proven. The discrepancy between claims is alarming and unconvincing especially when climate change benefits are the basis for justification for initiation of these projects.

Evaluations and conclusions drawn from investigations conducted as long as five to ten years ago are not current and cannot be accepted as valid in light of the rapid technological change for investigative and analytical evaluation that has occurred over that period. Currency of investigations undertaken to underpin decision making and determination of a future power source, is relevant and must be appropriate.

-Turbine Technology

While the technology remains undefined the environmental impact assessment is merely a prediction based on an average. It is the theory of a probability 'scenario.' It cannot be relied on to assess the concern for any specific species, nor the true impact on a community. In addition to this, I am aware of a number of European Windfarm projects which have caused significant damage to surrounding landscape and fixtures due to turbine & metal fatigue resulting in material breakdown (i.e. blades dislodging from towers). What assurance can be provided that the technology to be employed will avoid these issues? What factor is calculated into the carbon neutral timeframe equation for relevant maintenance of this nature?

-Methane.

Preliminary research attributes a capacity for some alpine soils to absorb more methane than grazing cattle of these regions can emit. The quantities of cement and gravel base for roads that will cover these soils must be evaluated and included in calculations for carbon neutral claims.

-Transmission

Invariably wind generation is selected for lower populated areas although the demand for electricity consumption is greatest where the greater population dwells. Leakage through transmission is inevitable. Residents affected by transmission lines are affected irrespective of the source of the electricity generated. Technology for onsite

generation in cities is available and needs to be further developed improved and perfected to minimise the effects of long distance transmission and the associated visual pollution. Where lengthy transmission systems cannot be avoided mitigation strategies must be negotiated by way of compensation for the long term impact on communities, the affected parties.

-Dung beetles.

In consideration of Environmental impact, an investigation of some insects vital to the productivity of the grazing industry should be included. There are a number of native dung beetles active in our grazing environment. While naturally active in macropod dung, they have adapted to work effectively in the dung of both sheep and cattle.

Graziers are investing heavily in introduction and monitoring of redistributed, climatically matched, beetle populations. Dung Beetles have the capacity to return nutrient to the soil, and so prevent its entry into the waterways. They are beneficial in the chemical free control of bushfly and buffalo fly populations. Wind turbines may adversely affect these insects as they fly at dusk and dawn, following scent plumes, to find new food sources. A study of the affects of the turbines on the survival of this insect population should be taken into consideration. No studies have been conducted and therefore the outcome cannot be assumed.

-Native Bees are delicate, timid and easily disturbed. Small colonies inhabit woodlands or isolated trees. They perform vital pollination of native vegetation and pastures along with other insect pollinators ie moth and buttrerflies.

Commercial Apiary Sites rely on pasture and timber sources within the locality and easily suffer dislocation. Studies on the affect of the Windfarm on native bees and other pollinators as well as commercial apiary operations should be undertaken, evaluated, and the impact on communities recognised with an appropriate and responsible strategies.

-Aerial seeding and fertilising

The Grazing industry is dependent on plant germination and growth. Graziers have been advised of increased costs for fertiliser spreading due to the presence of Wind Farms. Mitigation strategies should be outlined to address the increased cost to commercial farming operations and increased danger to aerial agricultural operators.

-Weeds

The risks of transfers of “weeds of significance” are noted for attention during movement, construction and earthworks. However the effect on plants with wind borne seeds lacks reference. We could experience varying distribution patterns of noxious weeds such as nodding thistle, serrated tussock & African lovegrass, for example, due to variation of air turbulence patterns. Noxious weeds and environmental weeds pose a threat to both the natural environment and the sustainability of the grazing industry. All actions that may vary seed distribution patterns need investigation and quantification, so that the affected parties can be offered appropriate mitigation.

- **Gravel and Water** being sourced locally will impact on a plethora of local industries through increased price in response to demand on limited capacity of local

industry to supply. Engagement should be undertaken with local suppliers, Local Council to adequately address this issue.

If it is found that costs are to escalate for local users, short or long term, as a result of the presence of the windfarm project, mitigation strategies should be outlined to address these increased costs across the client base.

-Hydrological studies

Hydrological surveillance in any area is warranted given the high incidence of spring water present in hilltop locations, the common position for placement of deep foundation pads for windfarm structures. Any disruption of these water systems will impact heavily on local use and on river catchments that emerge in the mountain ranges.

-Surety

Adequate measures must be in place to ensure that proponents establish appropriate trust funds prior to construction, in order to guarantee the availability of sufficient financial resources for a complete reclamation of wind generation facilities in the event of market failure or business failure. Where approvals are to be given, authorities have the responsibility to ensure appropriate mechanisms are in place to guarantee sufficient funds for the recovery of all components of expired wind generation equipment and the ongoing repatriation of the entire site, all thoroughfares and precincts.

I am already aware of communities with contracts, committed to retainers, for reserved sites, intended to guarantee their future business, who have defaulted. In economic terms this has significant ramifications across a community, as individuals are contracted to a single operator in any given project area.

The case in Point.

Right now I can cite a case where the monitoring structure remains in place, there has been a default on payments to this farm and to neighbouring properties, although due.

There has been no explanation, no offer of compensation, restoration or reclamation of the site.

Higher fertiliser prices continue to apply due to the presence of the structure.

Excess traffic has been experienced across the site while ever the site has been active.

The owners have offered the property for sale.

Repeated buyers reject this property due to uncertainty and complications.

This scenario and those like it cannot be allowed and certainly must be avoided in the future.

-Cumulative Impact

With several Wind Farm projects being proposed in the local district, none can be considered in isolation. The **cumulative effect** on the ecology, visual amenity, resource base and social impact must also be evaluated over the wider area.

Thank you for your consideration of my submission, I look forward to the outcome of the inquiry and trust that future action will be appropriate within and for communities.

Regards,

Beth White