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8<sup>th</sup> February 2011

Re: Senate inquiry - The Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms

To the Senate Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this inquiry.

The Cairns and Far North Environment Centre would like to express our support for a rapid transition to renewable energy, including wind power. We fully support the establishment of wind farms at appropriate sites throughout Australia, as this is an important step in making the transition away from unsustainable fossil fuel-based electricity generation. Wind farms offer many positive outcomes for rural areas and are a vital aspect of Australia's renewable energy future which will see cleaner air, a safer climate and green jobs in rural areas across the country.

Wind Farm projects offer excellent opportunities for rural and regional communities in Australia. These projects create jobs in these regional areas – many of which are in need of economic stimulus. They also offer the chance for people to gain new skills that will help to position Australia as a world leader in renewable energy generation, which would have obvious economic benefits.

In the Atherton Tablelands here in Far North Queensland, Windy Hill wind farm near Ravenshoe has provided an important boost to the local economy by providing jobs and income generation, but also by providing an additional tourist attraction. Many people visit the farm for its beautiful views and sustainable technology, something that cannot be said for any of Australia's coal-fired power stations.

Renewable energy, including wind power, is an essential element of our response to climate change. We must make the transition to low carbon, renewable energy as quickly as possible. Of course we must do so safely and responsibly, but we must also do so quickly and efficiently. At this time we need to support this fledgling industry and it is important that we do not place unnecessary restrictions on wind farms due to unfounded claims of negative social or economic impacts.

Research has revealed no evidence of adverse health impacts for people living near wind farms, with current concerns based on nothing but conjecture. Research conducted on modern wind turbines has



shown that the levels of low frequency noise and infrasound are within accepted thresholds. World Health Organisation (WHO) studies have found no reliable evidence that sound below the hearing threshold will produce physiological or psychological effects. Studies have also revealed no statistical evidence that wind farms reduce nearby property values.

As mentioned above, the employment benefits are substantial and widely spread across regions, and provide considerable opportunities for individuals and communities where they are located, including the land owners who host turbines.

Transitioning to renewable energy, including wind power, is the most crucial step in responding to climate change and building the low carbon communities that we need. Wind power, along with other renewable energy sources, represents a clean, safe source of power that will never run out. In making the transition away from coal, wind will help to improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas pollution, restore economic vitality to regional areas and improve the health of our communities, while offering a low carbon, sustainable solution to our current energy and pollution problems.

Regards,

Anna McGuire  
Urban Sustainability Officer

#### **Background information:**

*Land Value Impact of Wind Farm Development in Crookwell, New South Wales (2006)* Henderson Property Consultants, NSW.

*National Health and Medical Research Council Public Statement (July 2010).*

*The Health Impact of Wind Turbines: A Review of the Current White, Grey, and Published Literature (2008)* Chatham-Kent Public Health Unit, Municipal Council Chatham Ontario.

*Wind Turbines and Health: A Rapid Review of the Evidence (July 2010)* National Health and Medical Research Council, Australia.

*Wind Turbine Sound and Health Effects: An Expert Panel Review (2009)* Prepared by: W. David Colby, Robert Dobie, Geoff Leventhall, David M. Lipscomb, Robert J. McCunney, Michael T. Seilo, Bo Søndergaard. Prepared for American Wind Energy Association and Canadian Wind Energy Association.