

The Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms.

Submission to Senate Inquiry.

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WIND FARMS ARE NOT EFFICIENT ENOUGH TO WARRANT LOSING SO MUCH COUNTRYSIDE.

We retired [tree changers] from a hectic life in Melbourne and relocated to provincial Victoria, and discovered a small

historic town in a quiet, beautiful rural area.

About one year ago we learnt of a potential industrial size wind farm [financial farm] to be constructed just 3 kms; from

our property on the edge of town, a wind farm of approximately 225 turbines - 175 m, tall. The proponents secretly went

about their business of signing -up landholders and farmers to host turbines, long before the community or apparently the local

Shire council were informed of the proposal .The local community/ ratepayers had no initial say nor was their opinion sort

about the prospect of an industrial development right next to the town, in what is an environmentally sensitive area.

The proposed W.F will be located in the middle of a UNESCO listed Geopark known as Kanawinka [land of tomorrow !]

The First and only Geopark in Australia. There are many Volcanic features in the area and an extinct Volcano Mount Rouse ,

100 m; tall is next to the town, the wind towers will visually dominate the Volcano, the lava flow features and the town.

The Geopark concept is based on three main points, **Geotourism. Education and Conservation.**

Features can be appreciated by visiting the website, --- www.kanawinkageopark.com

Obviously we would not have relocated to this area if we had prior knowledge of the proposed development. We know of

several other new arrivals who are of the same opinion. This is in conflict with policies Australia wide to try to persuade

people to move away from over populated and congested urban cities and towns. I would like someone to tell me who

would want to move and live next to an industrial size wind farm. [there is no question that the value of property in the area

of a wind farm declines by some 30 %. as stated by Mr; McIntyre of ELDERS rural services and reported in the Weekly Times

- 02- 02 -2011] Proponents of course deny this, they put the usual spin on the problem to suite their argument, they don't want anything to come in the way of them making huge profits, largely from tax rebates, subsidies and higher energy prices to pay for wind power development..

The uncontrolled development of wind farms is being carried out in the name of a flawed technology. Independent

expert opinion highlights how utterly useless wind power is. The wind power push is being driven by Politicians who should know better, aided by the P.R, the spin merchants and lobbying by large wind power companies with big profits the primary motivator.

Is it any wonder that individuals and small rural communities feel powerless in the face of all of this ? ,they feel that they are being treated with contempt and are not properly consulted or listened to early in the process. Rural communities feel excluded and marginalised at Panel hearings stacked with lawyers, consultants and expert witnesses being paid big money to get the desired result - planning approval for their clients. Many consultants often present inaccurate and misleading assessments and then let the so called expert witnesses and lawyers take over. Local shire councils and statutory bodies are then left to sort out the mess later, after construction ,including landholders who forgot to read the small print in their confidentially agreements.

Jobs, ? full time jobs for locals after construction, amount to no more than a handful of positions. Most maintenance can be carried out off -site via someone with a computer sitting in an office some distance away, a six monthly visit from an electrical engineer maybe all that is required for regular maintenance.

Rural tourism ? turbines have long ceased being a novelty value, indeed many tourists will simply want to by- pass a large industrial wind farm and will certainly not want to stop off in any small town in the area, denying any possible tourist economic benefits.[In Waubra , Victoria, a small town close to a 130 turbine windfarm, even the local pub/ hotel has closed down.] Hamilton, our nearest service town bills itself as ' Naturally rich ' , - hardly appropriate if it is to be surrounded by industrial wind farms !

Life , business and society is all about achieving BALANCE, this should also include balance in the renewable energy debate and options.An example is Denmark, a country heavily reliant on wind power. Last year the Danish Government started to phase out on-shore wind power subsidies [Noise was a major issue .] and will move to a more balanced options/ mix in renewable energy production industries including Biogas, Solar and off -shore wind farms. In the U.K. in 2010, 50 % of all on -shore wind farm proposals were rejected, ---- why ? ---The public are first of all better informed about all the issues and there is a strategy as well as a policy covering how many windfarms will be allowed in the same area [cumulative impacts]

It is prudent for all of us to learn from overseas experience , we do not need to make the same mistakes.

The Victorian Government needs to be congratulated in achieving a balance with their new wind farm policy. This Policy is a starting point for more of a fair- go for everyone and should be considered as a national template / overlay , as a matter of urgency

The cry of NIMBY'S is no longer a valid argument. We are talking about the destruction and social division of many small rural communities and there is environmental vandalism occurring on a massive scale. Latte swilling inner suburban left leaning greenies just ' don't get it ' , they have little or no idea of country or rural values or the natural World and the place of people in the rural Landscape.

More care and protection must be directed to our unique, rural Landscapes and the people before it is too late.

One issue not being adequately addressed is the fast developing problem of dealing with CUMULATIVE impacts, where

two or more wind farms lie in the same area. [refer to attachment,- Cumulative wind farm map.]

A very large 'visual ' envelope 'can result.

The cumulative impacts include, visual, noise and environmental ,over extensive areas, with little or no separation or 'buffer' zones

between different wind farms. This is visual domination of rural landscapes and is industrial development, one has to take into

account, all the ancillary infrastructure such as access.and service tracks, concrete batching,sub power stations. overhead transmission cables etc; etc; Infrastructure that the publicity photo' shots of a few wind turbines gently blowing in the wind on some distant hill top never show.

While a landscape may be capable of accommodating a single windfarm, it may not be able to accommodate multiple wind farms

without a significant change to the landscape, its character or the extent to which people value the area.

The impact of multiple windfarms on critical bird species may add up to a level which cannot be sustained in one area

[the endangered Brolga.] The European Wind Energy Association recommends that wind farms should not be located in areas important for birds.

Increasing importance and due diligence should be placed on the assessment of cumulative effects and impacts.

The scale and impact of modern windfarms , the size, the height of turbines ,the size of the area covered by the wind farms and

the number of turbines all have potential for wide ranging social and natural landscape impacts in rural areas and towns.

The National Environment Protection Council, issued a comprehensive draft report in July 2010, -----

National Wind Farm Development Guidelines. The guidelines were distributed with consultations taking place during the year after the draft release .

A working group of Commonwealth and State officials will then collate any suggested changes to the draft guidelines and present their results to the EPHC.

The study guidelines were instigated in response to community concerns about wind farms and aim to give greater transparency

and consistency to the development process by clearly outlining the key principles and issues for consideration by the relevant

authorities. The full draft report can be downloaded by visiting the NEPC website.
