

Department of the Senate
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Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Submission re: The Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms

I beg the indulgence of the committee to hear my brief submission on the issue of wind farm placement. I am a farmer living on the outskirts of Adelaide where we produce prime lambs primarily for export. Our family has been in farming for a number of generations. Approximately 12 months ago my wife and I were approached by a couple of different wind farm representatives about the possible placement of turbines on our rural property. As we are both sensitive to looming environmental issues we initially saw this as a positive thing. Both representatives reassured us as to the benign nature of the development and spoke only of the many advantages of their respective projects. Nevertheless I decided that I would investigate the issue myself before considering whether or not to give consent in the future.

I must confess I was staggered by the amount of material I was able to access from all around the world, most of which was critical of wind farm developments; especially in relation to their impact upon those people living within close proximity. It appeared that they may not be as benign as the wind farm advocates were suggesting. What troubled me most were the many heartfelt stories of people in situations not dissimilar from our own, (potentially surrounded by wind turbines in a rural precinct) who walked

away from their homes rather than live with the impacts of such developments.

I understand that these stories are anecdotal and that there has been no causal link established between wind farm impacts (noise, infrasound, shadow flicker etc) and individual health outcomes however I would make the following observation:

Farmers are a stoic and robust lot. They are as a group self sufficient and fiercely independent. They frequently cope with all types of adversity. They have an almost pathological commitment to maintaining a connection with their land (something I don't think is unique to Australian farmers). So when we hear of such of people, from anywhere in the world, walking away from their homes, it should send up all sorts of red flags.

The science of the health impacts of wind farms is unresolved. If we have learned anything from the tobacco, asbestos, pesticide, PCB's, skin cancer and other, previously thought to be, innocuous issues, it should be to tread softly when dealing with new technologies. Prevention is surely better than cure.

Consequently I was greatly heartened by the Baillieu Government's proposed policy for wind development in Victoria, especially the mandatory 2km setback from residences (unless the owners forfeit this right). I would like to see this adopted as a national standard.

I believe from what I have read that many jurisdictions around the world are contemplating similar setbacks to avoid future disquiet or possible litigation.

I hope the committee accepts the genuineness of this modest submission, (coming from someone who would stand, potentially, to benefit to the tune of some tens of thousands of dollars per year from such a development) and works to protect the interests of a small minority of Australians without a voice.