

Ms Noelene Nelson

The Senate Community Affairs Committee Enquiry into the social and economic impact of rural wind farms – Submission.

Over 21 years ago, I moved my infant son from the increasingly over-crowded, polluted urban environs of Sydney to the relative peace and better living conditions of Canberra. Since then, Canberra has become far more populated, over-developed and crowded, which is not to my personal taste.

In 2010, my partner and I decided to look outside the ACT for a peaceful rural building block within commuting distance to Canberra, as we both work for Commonwealth Departments in the ACT and are both seeking a healthier rural environment and community. In May 2010, we purchased a beautiful, northerly-aspected block in Collector NSW, on the top of a small hill with extensive rural views and had plans to build an environmentally friendly dream home. In October 2010, we were informed that Transfield Services were proposing to develop an 80 turbine Wind Farm near Collector and the turbine installation would start as close as 2.8kms from our block of land. This proposal will seriously affect the views from our property and also ruin the ambience of the area entirely. I was horrified. If we had known that this horror was being planned, we would never have bought the block.

The lack of notice to property buyers such as ourselves about plans for future wind farms in the area, in view of the fact that the wind farms substantially impact upon neighbouring land, is outrageous. There is absolutely no way I will live anywhere near a wind farm, so now our block of land remains vacant, my feelings about our plans for building our home have been changed from happy anticipation to angry despair. I feel we are stuck with a \$170,000 proverbial “lemon”, but for which we still have to pay a mortgage and council rates. If we could sell the block, we would lose a considerable sum of money as well as our plans and hopes for our future. There is absolutely no justice for us in any of this process.

I am about to embark on a new career as a Marriage and Life Events Celebrant and had big plans for enticing marrying couples (and all that entails) out to the community of Collector to celebrate their big day. If this wind farm development goes ahead, I will be unable to do so as I won't be living there at all.

Yesterday, the 5th of February 2011, my partner and I decided to look at other options for land within commuting distance to Canberra and looked around the town of Gunning and were quite keen on the land and facilities available in the town. Then today, the 6th of February, I received an email detailing the fact that there are 31 turbines currently being

constructed near Gunning so yet again, our hopes have been dashed, as I will never buy anything near a wind farm. In fact, in the Lachlan Valley Shire there have been 246 turbines approved with another 150 proposed, so I cannot live anywhere in this shire because of this.

There is entirely inadequate community compensation provided by industrial wind facility developers in view of the broad impact of wind farms.

Wind farm developers are not required to assess the effect of the proposal on surrounding land values and there is no ongoing government research about the effects of wind farms on rural property values. In all this process, residents of rural communities are treated as second-class citizens and as people who are expendable.

I have since attended three meetings at the hall in Collector in regards to this proposal by Transfield. I have witnessed distressed, angry, confused and despairing local residents at each of these meetings, entirely opposed to this huge invasion into their lives. I have also witnessed some very unpleasant exchanges between the landholders who have agreed to accept money from Transfield to host the turbines on their land, and the other local residents. These are people who have lived in harmony together in this rural community who are now no longer in harmony whatsoever, in fact they are at odds, and it is very sad to witness. The tactics of companies like Transfield who secretly develop these plans and the confidentiality provisions which gag participating landowners from discussing the projects, are to be abhorred.

I have researched Wind Farms (more precisely, perhaps, “Industrial Wind Developments”) and I am extremely concerned by the emerging evidence of the appalling health effects these developments are having on people living within 10kms of them, not just in Australia, but around the world. The closest of the 80 turbines is proposed to be within 2.8kms of my land and several other turbines will be within 5kms of our property (and those of many other residents in and around Collector) and the remainder destroying the remaining rural vista, of which, I would have “views” of. It makes me so very angry just thinking of all my plans being ruined by a greedy, money-oriented power company whose only motivation in all this, in reality, is the all-mighty dollar, and this is being pandered to by the NSW State Government! God, give me strength!

I am shocked that in modern-day Australia that a development such as this, which has the potential to destroy people’s health and damage the developing hearing and brains of children is even being considered. This is not even taking into account the environmental damage done during and after installation and the impact on wildlife and farm animals.

The infrasound these massive turbines create (they are 150m tall to the top of the blades, which is taller than the Sydney Harbour Bridge), has been shown to cause;
Increased blood pressure (known to Doctors as the silent killer)

Tinnitus

Nausea

A constant feeling of motion-sickness

Severe headaches

Sleep disturbance – which leads to other serious health issues

Hearing damage (tissue damage)

Depression and suicidal thoughts

They don't put these wind farm developments in urban areas such as Sydney, because urban communities don't want these turbines near them, as it is well known they are very noisy, or have them ruining their views of their harbour! Also, there are far more people to cause health problems in cities and power companies can't take the risk of hundreds of thousands of compensations claims, as opposed to just hundreds in beleaguered, ignored, rural communities.

I implore you to investigate these developments and the lack of any protection for people, and you will be as convinced as I am that they should never be built and we should be instead moving to solar power generation, which has no health impacts.

The government has failed to, and does not propose to, conduct any research into the adverse health effects of wind farms despite the substantial body of evidence suggesting that wind farms cause damage to neighbouring residents and gives unqualified support to the wind industry despite this evidence.

Governments are deliberately ignoring the negative effects of wind farms so that they can be seen to be doing something about global warming. They are using our countryside for their symbolism and spin!

There is inadequate economic and environmental justification for wind farms including:

the inefficiency and unreliability of wind power;

the lower community and environmental impact and soon-to-be equivalent capacity of solar;

the consumer funded subsidy of wind farm operators' business; and

the effect of the subsidy in the form of higher electricity prices for everyone.

No more wind farm developments should be considered for approval until independent studies have been conducted on the impacts on people's lives, health and the economic and social injury of the surrounding communities. Wind farm developments are shaping up to be the next big Class-Action in our courts across Australia as these developments are being approved without due consideration.

I am confident that further studies will back-up those which have already been conducted and prove that these wind farm developments are detrimental to people, communities, the local environment, and wildlife. They must be stopped.

Sincerely

Via online submission

Noelene Nelson