Senate Enquiry
The Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms
Introduction:
My name is Bryan Lyons. I am a Registered Urban and Rural Valuer with the Valuers Registration Board in Queensland and I practised for 15 years up to the year 2000. I now own and operate a cattle fattening and horse breeding and training business with my wife and 2 sons. We are located at Cooranga North which is between Dalby and Kingaroy. Our property is surrounded by a proposed wind farm of approximately 120 towers to be developed.
Our cattle business involves the purchase of livestock from different areas and locating them onto pasture to ensure maximum weight gains are achieved in the shortest possible time period.
Our horse breeding and training business involves breeding and training of our own horses and also the training of clients horses. It is essential that young horses be trained in a low stress, safe environment.
Generally, members of the local district were very much in favour of the proposed wind farm understanding it would produce economic green energy without any impact on our lifestyles or farm incomes. The district as a whole was very naive and very uninformed at the time.
Effect on Farm Animals:
Our family declined to be involved in the project as we knew our horse training business was not compatible with 140 metre high turbines with blade tips moving up to 200 kilometres an hour. The energy company has refuted this claim. However, my opinion is well supported by the British Horse Society Advisory Statement that recommends a setback of at least 4 times the overall height away from the path of horses to minimise the safety risk. Andrew Tribe from The University Of Queensland , animal behaviour expert, also provided us with a report that stated in his experience "both cattle and horses would take time to get use to the noise and movement of a wind turbine and that he would expect greater risk to horse and rider safety near the turbines". This concerns us greatly as the plan for the proposed wind farm has situated 12 turbines on neighbours properties to be placed on our boundaries. This will mean we will be at a greater risk checking fences and mustering cattle on horseback near our boundaries.
Wind farms do effect cattle production and horse safety on adjoining land.
What evidence has been presented to show cattle weight gains on adjoining land near wind turbines are not affected?
Our cattle and horse business is a successful profitable business that is not subsidised by the community in any way. Why should it be impacted by an industry that operates at a cost to the community through government subsidy, is inefficient and unreliable and will operate to produce profit for shareholders and not the community?
Wind energy is not compatible with the existing uses and therefore should be located at a distance that it doesn't impact on cattle and horses. Turbines should be located at least 4 times their overall height away from all neighbours' boundaries.
Noise:
Two independent Acoustic Engineers have assessed the noise impact of the neighbours turbines on our dwelling and both have stated the noise will exceed the bedroom noise levels allowable under the Queensland guidelines. Our house is 1.2 km to the nearest

proposed turbine. The energy company says the turbines will not be heard as long as you are greater than 1 km from the turbine. Both acoustic engineers recommend a distance of at least 2 km and preferably 3.5 km. The Victorian Government policy of 2 km aligns with the assessments of both acoustic engineers. Why is the energy company proposing setbacks of less than 2 km?

We have made contact with people living beside existing wind farms at Hallett who are experiencing sleep disturbance at distance between 1.5 km and 3km. We are aware 6 turbines have been turned off at a distance of 1.5 km from one farmer ((...)) because of noise problems. How could the same company then propose to build larger turbines at lesser distances at their next project?

No turbines should be located closer than 3.5 kilometres from the nearest dwelling.

Wind farm effect on land Values:

The energy company has told us our land values won't be affected by the wind farm and they have based this argument on a report commissioned by the NSW Government and contracted to Valuer Bob Dupont by the NSW Valuer General. The report concluded that there was no evidence to suggest wind farms had any impact on land values.

I found in this report three sales investigated by a valuer John Jess, CJA Lee Valuers, Yarram, Victoria that showed 30% to 50% reductions in values as a result of either a proposed or constructed wind farm. Mr Dupont dismissed the sales for reasons unknown, however Mr Jess is adamant the sales are a good representation of the market value of the properties taking into account the wind farm effects. One particular property was marketed for approximately a 2 year period and the sale price was the best they could get. Mr Jess did inspect and investigate the sales and was very experienced in the local market. Valuer Alan Hives, Leader Property Practice, Ballarat is also aware of the sales and advised me they were a good indication of the affect of wind farms on land values. Valuer Jess gave a presentation at the Australian Property Institute Country Conference on the 23rd of August 2008. His presentation included the above sales to demonstrate the negative affect wind farms are having on land values.

In our local area we are aware of potential buyers not wanting to commit to purchasing a property until they are aware of the outcome of the proposed wind farm.

Wind farms do have a negative effect on surrounding land values.

Sales evidence suggests wind farms affect land values by up to 50%.

NSW commissioned report is not accurate in its conclusions that wind farms don't affect land values and is contrary to real estate agents and other valuers opinions.

Unacceptable Fire Risk:

Three fires have occurred in South Australia alone in the last four years. Many more have occurred in other parts of the world. Fire crews are kept one kilometre away making it impossible to restrict the fire to the immediate area. The fire destroys the gearing and allows the rotors to spin freely and as they increase speed the rotors begin to break up making it necessary to stay at least one kilometre away. We have large areas of improved pastures that are not fire tolerant and would potentially be destroyed by fire. This country is usually heavily grassed and would be almost impossible to stop a fire on a hot windy day. This increased risk of losing expensive pasture improvements, fodder reserves, structural improvements, livestock and possibly human lives to have an unreliable, unviable subsidised electricity source is unwarranted.

Our local fire warden believes that the wind turbines would present an increased risk of a

fire in our local area. The warden further states that the local fire brigade would not have the necessary resources to deal with a turbine fire.
Wind farms should be restricted to low fire risk areas such as the sea, high rainfall areas, rocky areas with little vegetation etc.

Informed Community Attitude to Wind farm Proposal:
As a result of having a noise analysis completed for the proposed wind farm our community have discovered many of them are likely to experience noise problems at their dwellings as a result of the proposed turbines and many are also now concerned about the effects on their cattle grazing performance and safety while mustering on horseback as a result of turbines placed on or near their boundaries. These concerns were recently reflected at a local community meeting of approximately 50 people where 83% voted for the wind farm not to be built, 14 % were unsure and 3% voted for the wind farm to be built. This community did their research which included hiring the best psychoacoustic engineer they could find and then making a decision on the facts. This is a stark contrast to the attitude of the naive community only months before. This community is in favour of renewable energy but not at a ridiculous price and particularly when this cost includes our health and safety.
We are continually told there is no scientific evidence to show wind turbines cause health problems.
What scientific evidence is there to show wind turbines don't cause health effects?
If there is no scientific evidence, then the precautionary principle should apply and wind turbines should be built no less than 3.5 km away from dwellings.
Why do developers of wind farms have compensation payments tied to a non-disclosure clause?
Why do people move away from wind farms?
Wind energy is not being built for the greater good as it is unreliable and uneconomic. It is impacting on the safe and effective operations of adjacent uses, infrastructure and activities and this contravenes Local Government planning legislation.
I refer you to the QLD State Planning Policy 1/92, Development and the Conservation of Agricultural Land, Policy Principle 8
8. Local Authority planning provisions should aim to minimise instances of incompatible uses locating adjacent to agricultural operations in a manner that inhibits normal farming practice. Where such instances do arise, measures to ameliorate potential conflicts should be devised wherever possible.

Yours truly
Bryan Lyons