

Tom Robertson

Wind Energy Submission. 17-02-2011.

I am 75 years of age living and born on a property in Western Victoria; family owned since 1884. I have been involved in other enterprises such as meat exports, cropping in Northern NSW, tourism on The Great Barrier Reef, and industrial property.

In about 2002 I began to approach wind farm developers, operating along the Southern Victorian coast, to suggest they come inland where there was more room and the towers would have less impact on the landscape. Now, in 2011, this has brought the Macarthur Wind Farm to the district.

Before committing to be a participating landholder I went through all the negatives ascribed to wind farms, without finding any reason to believe I could not continue to live on and farm the land with wind turbines or place an unreasonable effect on adjacent land owners. I also relied on the permit process to adjudicate this.

Of course there was noise and shadowing effect plus a danger to birds and bats to be considered. These did and still do not seem sufficient to stop the development here, Nor would they make me object to wind farms in general or near where I live.

My life on the land and involvement in tourism on the sea with transport, coral viewing, snorkeling, diving and whale watching has made me acutely aware of how we, country and city dwellers, are all dependent on the earth's soils and atmosphere. Food is our first necessity.

I cannot answer the question: "Is global warming really happening?" even from my many years of dependence on reasonably stable and predictable weather cycles. But I do know how our current weather can severely test our skills and fortitude. My simple wish is for life to go on for our descendants undamaged by what we do now.

The science that says carbon as CO₂ in the atmosphere is likely to disturb the balance of the sun's heat in and out, seems intuitively correct. and too big of a risk for us to take by going on burning the quantities of fossil fuels we do now, let alone increase it. The risk of not changing is just too great to contemplate.

And so, to the role of Government. A few people will change but most will stay with the cheapest option of fossil fuel – coal petroleum and gas etc. Asking themselves the question: "Why just me?" These people will respond to leadership that brings us all into caring for the future. A tax on carbon emissions, designed to reduce those emissions, will, of course, increase the cost of energy but that tax can offset other taxes or be used for social purposes. It is important that the increased cost is acknowledged as a "cost" and not be muddled into being labeled "inflationary". Any Government, wishing to be appreciated must care for the revenue collected from a "carbon tax" and spend it wisely - possibly on those who cannot afford higher energy prices.

Short term storage of electrical energy will become important. Private enterprise knows this and is working for a big prize.

Wind farms seem one of a very few currently viable way we can get the energy we need, or demand, without releasing carbon stored in fossil fuels. They have problems of reliability but, if it was our only or major source of energy, we would adapt. My ancestors and many people living away from cities adapted, often with wind power, quite successfully.

To adapt now we need energy pricing that reflects availability. I have seen suggestions of a “three tariff” system which I understand as having the the first tariff being “always on” but higher priced for essential things such as lighting, phones, network servers and hospitals. Then a middle range guaranteeing say 80% availability for air conditioning and machine processes that could be shut down. With a third cheapest option that would only be available when there was a surplus, decided by a “power authority” or the producers, for hot water and electric car battery charging. If the users could decide and set a smart system to the cheapest option then they would adapt to the supply and probably install their own storage and complementary generating system of batteries and maybe solar.

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