

Codrington Wind Farm Tours

To the Senate Inquiry re wind farms

We have been offering tours of the Codrington Wind Farm since it opened in July 2001, and including the neighbouring Yambuk Wind Farm since 2008. In that time, we have welcomed literally thousands of people of all ages, backgrounds and interests to the wind farms.

Initially, we thought the tour operation might have a life of some 2 years, given the relative novelty of the Codrington Wind Farm being the first commercial operation of its size in Australia. However, we continue to operate some 10 years later, and continue to receive bookings and inquiries, despite virtually no direct advertising for the past 5 years. We have taken 3 bookings for tours this week, a rate that is fairly consistent during the autumn and spring months.

Almost to a person, there are two very predictable reactions when people first arrive under a wind tower:

1. They're much bigger than I thought (i.e. from the relatively short distance away of the highway, the towers do not seem extremely large)
2. They don't make any noise; I was expecting them to be noisy (from the various accounts in the media generally).

Re noise levels:

The wind farms at Codrington and Yambuk are not noisy, either at close quarters or from distances away. Up close, we invariably have to ask bus/coach drivers to turn their engines off, or people are not able to discern any other sounds in the vicinity at all, let alone the turning of the blades. However, as a society we are so accustomed to the sound of engines that people do not even stop to consider this an intrusive sound.

Noise is possibly the principal issue discussed in the media, to an extent that it has reached 'urban myth' proportions! One consequence however, is that when people actually visit the wind farms and discover the lack of noise, they tend to become cynical of other information from the media and realise that much of the negativity around wind farms may not be accurate.

The only reason we ever have to raise our voices to our tour groups in the vicinity of the towers to answer is to be heard over the incessantly strong winds – not the noise of the towers themselves.

It may be that other wind farms are noisier than Codrington/Yambuk, but this is our experience.

Other public concerns:

Over the years, we have received numerous questions from people as diverse as pre-schoolers to graduate engineers. In general these fall into a small number of categories (not including technical queries), some of which will be of interest to you:

- Do they kill birds? Obviously you will have access to the literature on this, but we have never seen dead birds, bats or other creatures in the vicinity of the towers. This question tends to reflect the urban nature of our society and a general unfamiliarity with bird life and the various threats they face.
- What's in it for the farmers? Again a question to which you will have the answers. But we would mention that since these wind farms have been in operation over the past decade,

several farms in the immediate vicinity and general neighbourhood have changed hands (one on which towers are located), with apparently no adverse effects on price or saleability.

- Do they scare the cows/sheep? Again a question that reflects urban living and shows no understanding of livestock. A simple no.

We would welcome you to visit the Codrington/Yambuk wind farms and come on one of our tours. Several years ago, one of our visitors was a legal man who had sat on planning committees to allow/appeal wind farms in Victoria, yet he confessed he had never visited a wind farm the whole time he had been in this position. It seems wind farms are surrounded by layers of ignorance, not necessarily malicious, just poorly informed judgements.

We wish you well in your deliberations.

TIM & CARMEL BRADY
TOUR OPERATORS.